The Mantle of Elijah

by

Damon Dalrymple

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THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH

DAMON DALRYMPLE

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THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH

A LITTLE TALK BETWEEN TWO PROPHETS
WHO ARE ABOUT TO PART,
ONE TO HIS WORK, THE OTHER TO HIS REWARD

BY

DAMON DALRYMPLE

(Arthur Welton Henderson)

Near enough to the end of the journey
to see the distant hills,
And yet not far enough from the beginning
to have forgotten the lure of the road.

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THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH

THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH

CHAPTER I

THE OLD STORY

"And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha to Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel.

"And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.

"And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan. And he said,

As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

"And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

"And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan.

"And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither; and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets that were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him."

So runs the old story, of the close of one life and the beginning of another; and it is running yet, out of the

past up to the present, and on into the future, wherever one man leaves off and another begins. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the word of God abideth forever, and runneth where it will.

Sometimes one prophet is gone before the other appears, and there is an interval between them, as in the case of Moses and Samuel, when the voice of prophecy is intermittent. Sometimes one follows hard upon the heels of the other, taking the word of the Lord directly from his lips, as in the case of Elijah and Elisha, when the voice of prophecy is continuous. And sometimes their lives overlap a few years, and two voices are heard in the land at one and the same time, as in the case of Jesus and John, when the voice of prophecy is contemporaneous.

CHAPTER II

THE PASSING PROPHET

We have come together as far as we may, Elisha. You must go back, I must go on. My life is behind me, yours is before you, all unlived and your work undone. Whither I go you cannot come now. Some time, when your work is done and the last word is spoken; but not now. Work before rest, and service before reward. God walks in his garden in the cool of the day to meet those who have borne the burden and heat of the day's work.

The chariot of fire has come for me, Elisha, and for me alone. One by one we come, and one by one we go. The way into life is strait and narrow, and the way out of it is the same. Two cannot walk together. Here we leave all behind. Two men are ploughing in the field; one is taken, and the other left. Two women are grinding at the mill; one is taken, and the other left. Two prophets are walking in the way; one is taken, and the other left. It has been so from the beginning, it will be so to the end. We look up from our work, and see two there—two men at their task, two children at their play; and when we look up again, there is only one. The other is gone. Where? We may not know. We only know it is not there any more. The wind has passed over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more forever.

The wind is passing over me, Elisha. I feel it through all my frame. It has blown about me all these years, fanning my face, chafing my cheek, cooling my blood; it is passing over me now, and it will soon lay me low. I have counted the years, and the months, and the days; I am counting the hours now, Elisha, and they are few. I do not fear it, or shrink from it. It is God's wind, that bloweth where it will, bringing us into the world to-day, and carrying us out of it to-morrow. Some complain that it brings them in, others that it takes them out. I complain of neither. The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Life has been good here, and I am sure it will be better hereafter. God's world is not two, but one. Everywhere it is made of the same stuff, and behaves in the same manner. We are the same men on the other side of Jordan that we are on this side. And so with this other river to which I am coming. I shall suffer no change in the crossing. I shall know myself, and others shall know me. This place which has known me, and which I have known, shall soon know me no more. You will seek me, Elisha, but you will not find me. You will call, but I shall not answer. You will reach out empty hands, only to meet empty air. But other places shall know me, and I shall know other places; perhaps not in the same way I have known these, but in some way. In our Father's house are many rooms, but they are all under one roof. We pass from one room to another, from a lower to an upper, from a seen to an unseen; but we do not pass out of the house.

I have loved this world, and right gladly have I lived in it. I have heard complaint of it on every hand, but I have none to make. It is God's good green earth. He made it, and no work of His hands can be but good. It

looked good to Him the first day He saw it, and so it has looked to me, and never more so than now when I look upon it for the last time. Be not deceived, Elisha, by those who cry down mother earth. There is nothing wrong with the house we live in. It is the people in it, and even they are not as black as they are painted. Things can do no wrong, but the king can, and so can the peasant. Earth and sea and sky are neither good nor bad. They are neutral. It is the hands that handle them, the eyes that look upon them. When you begin to see serpents in the tendrils of vines, and fire and brimstone in autumn woods; when the songs of birds lose their gladness, and the laughter goes out of running water; don't go off under a juniper tree and despair of God's world. Go and see a doctor. In nine cases out of ten you will find that it is not the world that is out of joint, but your liver that is out of fix. I know whereof I speak, Elisha. I thought once that the good people were all dead, and that I alone was left to tell the story; but I was mistaken. There were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. God was still in His Heaven, and all was well with His world. It was only a passing cloud, the size of a woman's hand, between me and the sun.

Not that there is no evil in the world, Elisha. There is. No man with two good eyes can deny it. How it came to be here, or what it is doing here in God's world, we may not know. We only know it is here, the one dark blot upon an otherwise beautiful world. The origin of evil no one knows, and the reason of it no one can explain, but its presence no sane man can ignore. Only don't mistake where the evil is, Elisha. It is in the world, but not of it; a part of life, but not necessary to it.

Life can be awfully sweet at best, and it can be most awfully bitter at worst—as sweet as heaven, as bitter as hell; but neither the one nor the other comes from without us. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and from the same fountain flow sweet waters and bitter. It is sin that is the sting of life, and the sting of death, and the sting of everything else between life and death; and sin is a human thing. Never forget that, Elisha, the longest day you live, lest haply you be found fighting windmills when you ought to be fighting the devil.

Did you ever stop to consider how much uncalled-for goodness there is in the world, Elisha, how much unnecessary beauty in the course of nature? Bare existence would be possible without it. It is not essential to the natural order, so far as we can see. I see no reason why the sun could not rise and set without all this glory on sea and land, without so much colour in morning and evening skies; why the trees could not put forth their leaves, and bear their fruit, without the smell of heather or the fragrance of apple blossoms; why the birds could not meet and mate, build their nests and rear their young, without flooding the woods with song; why the seasons could not come and go, spring and autumn, winter and summer, without spreading the earth with flowers or setting the woods on fire with color. Look at those butterflies there, Elisha. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. Why are they clad in such gorgeous apparel? They could fly just as well with dull, drab wings. Why such painstaking care to fashion wings that perish over night, to paint leaves which last only for a summer? Why all these master strokes of colour across the sky, which fade while you are looking at them? Why all these burning bushes and flaming skies,

all this beauty and blossom and song? It is but the extra goodness which God throws in along with our daily bread. Mr. Gradgrind would grant us only the bare facts of life, but not so our heavenly Father. He throws over them the blue haze of Indian summer, and the romance of youth, and the glory of high adventure.

It all happens honestly, to be sure, and without violence to the natural order. The world is just built that way. But why is it built that way? Because God is good, and delights to bestow good things upon His children. And He is no respecter of persons. The blue sky bends with the same infinite tenderness over both saint and sinner, and the sun shines alike upon the just and the unjust. He looks with equal eyes upon all His children, though not with equal feelings. He is glad of some, and sad of others, but good to all.

Never has this old earth looked more fair to me than now, with the light of the setting sun upon it. It has put on its wedding garments to see me off. How grandly Tabor stands out there against the sky, with a golden mantle over his huge shoulders; and those oaks of Bashan yonder on the hilltop, stretching out their gaunt arms as if imploring me not to leave them; and the Jordan here, running away to the sea, and the purple Judean hills on the other side. How softly the west wind caresses my cheek. It comes from the distant sea, embracing in its wide sweep the roses of Sharon and the cedars of Lebanon. On the uplands of Gilead, the shepherds are leading home their sheep, and the women are bringing water from the well. These hills have been home to me, and shelter from the heat of summer and the hate of man. It is hard to think that these eyes shall never look upon all this again, that these ears shall hear no more the low-

ing of cattle at evening and the laughter of children at their play. I would be loath to leave this world, Elisha, if I did not believe in another, where we can have roses without thorns, the knowledge of good without the knowledge of evil, the presence of God without the sting of sin.

When I look upon this wide arena which I am leaving, the sweep of these mountains and the swell of these deserts, where the earth meets the sky in rolling lines at great distances, where caravans come and go from one end of the earth to the other and kingdoms rise and fall like autumn leaves; when I think of all the chances which come to men here of lofty emprise and heroic endeavour, I almost envy you the years which are before you, Elisha. Those which are behind me have been good, but those which are before you will be better. The boundaries of life are so far flung, and its carrying power so immeasurable. The field is the world, and it is so wide; the soil is our human life, and it is so fertile; the seed is the word of God, and it brings forth so abundantly. We cast our bread upon waters whose waves wash all shores. And there is so much of life and work yet in me. My eye is not dimmed, nor my natural strength abated. I don't feel a day older than I did two score years ago. My body is old, but I am not. I am sorry to leave it behind. I have been at home in it, and it has housed me comfortably all these years; but perhaps it would only be in the way whither I go. I do not know. Whether I shall have it back, or another, I know not. God shall give me a body as it pleaseth Him. I only know that I have done with this one. But I shall outlive it. I have lost it more than once in the course of my life, and I shall survive this last loss. Bodies come, and bodies go, but I go on for ever.

My work is done here, Elisha; but God has other worlds, and other work to be done in them. I shall not be idle. Life is long here, but it is longer hereafter. It is a far cry from Lebanon to Pisgah, from the sea to the Great River. I have covered every inch of the ground with weary feet, and I know. But when I think of the distance between these hills and the stars, Hermon and Carmel are less than molehills and the Great Sea is but a drop in the bucket. Our human life bulks large upon this earth, but under the stars it looms infinitely small. I feel dizzy as I think of faring forth among them.

I know not what awaits me there where all those stars are shining. I believe, but I do not know. But I shall know soon. Faith is about to become sight. And the nearness of the great discovery gives me pause. My eyes will soon close upon this world. When I open them again, what shall I see? I have sometimes thought, when my spirit chafed against the bars of its narrow cage and honed after freedom from the flesh, that I would gladly die in order to know what death only can reveal; but I confess to you, Elisha, as the hour of my release approaches and the end draws near, I feel a great awe, almost a great fear, upon me. It is no small adventure, this last irrevocable journey into the unseen. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what lies beyond. The door remains shut until we get to it, and it closes behind us when we pass through. There is no seeing before, nor coming back. We have no facts to go upon; only speculation, and hopes, and dreams. We who have been used to this solid earth beneath our feet, how we hesitate to step out upon such insubstantial stuff as dreams are made of. We hope, and we fear. Will it happen according to our hopes

or according to our fears? It remains to be seen, and each one of us must see for himself. Thousands have made the great discovery before me, but dead men tell no tales. Call as we will, there is no answer from the other side. What if we should be mistaken, after all, Elisha? No; I will not believe it. Get thee behind me, Satan. It cannot be. I shall survive the house in which I have lived, the tools with which I have worked. I can no more stop living than the Jordan there can stop running, with the snows of Hermon behind it. The source of my life is too high, the momentum of it too great. I feel in me the pressure of God's eternal hills, the call of His eternal years, and I shall not stop short of the sea. Forgive me, Elisha, if my poor human soul shrank for a moment in the presence of the great mystery of death. You will never know until you enter the valley of the shadow of it.

I don't know where I am going, Elisha, or what it will be like there; but I know to Whom I am going, and what He is like. Because He lives, and where He lives, I shall live also. I have known Him here, and I shall know Him there; and He will be the same, and I shall be the same. That is all I know, and that is all I need to know. Home is where mother is, and heaven is where God is.

CHAPTER III

THE FALLING MANTLE

I AM leaving this world, Elisha, as poor in its goods as I was the day I entered it. I brought nothing in, and I am taking nothing out. I have not striven to possess the earth, or to lay up treasures in it. It is not necessary to own it in order to enjoy it. Indeed, it has seemed to me that those who own most enjoy least. They are too busy to look up; either too busy trying to keep what they have, or too anxious to get more. Ahab is the richest man in Israel, and yet he gave himself no rest until he got Naboth's little vineyard, and I suspect he has had less rest since he got it.

I have reaped a rich harvest from this world, from these blue Syrian skies which have bent over me, from these hills which have received me worn and weary from my work and sent me back rested and refreshed to it, from these running streams and whispering trees and wide, open deserts; and this I shall take with me. But the sky and the mountains and the rivers and the plains, I leave to those who come after me. They are none the poorer because of the harvest which I have gleaned from them. They hold the same things for you, Elisha, ready to your hand, and when you have taken them, they will still be there for others. That is the glory of God's good earth for those who seek only to enjoy it. They enrich themselves, and rob not those who come after them.

Only the mantle on my back, and the staff in my hand. That is all I possess this day, Elisha, as I go to meet my God; and these I shall leave behind. The gate is strait and narrow, and admits only us. All that we have put on, we must put off. Naked we come, and naked we go. The camel must unlade its burden, and the rich man his load. Only that which we have put within can we take through. Give this staff to the first lame man you meet, Elisha, and tell him it is Elijah's last will and testament to him. This mantle, Elisha, I leave to you. It is not mine to give. I have worn it, but it is not mine; and you shall wear it, but it will not be yours. It is God's mantle, which He gives to whom He will. Others have worn it before me, and others will wear it after you. Men were wearing it long before you and I were born, and they will be wearing it long after we are dead and gone. Remember that, Elisha, and keep it out of the dust. It has covered a multitude of sins, and many grievous mistakes; but it has never covered a false heart, or an unworthy motive. God can forgive anything but that in His prophets. From that He will withdraw His spirit. The prophet's mantle is ever falling, from shoulder to shoulder, from one generation to another, because God's prophets are ever passing. It has worn out many prophets, but it is not worn out. Prophets come, and they go, but the mantle remains. Leaves come and go on the trees, but the woods remain. The blue haze comes and goes on the hills, but the hills abide. Clouds come and go in the sky, but the stars shine on. So God's workers come and go in the earth, but God remains, and His work goes on.

It is hard for me to realize how the earth will remain after I am gone, and that it will go on just the same,

not a tear more for winter, not a smile less for summer. But it will. It has survived the loss of others, and it will survive the loss of me. It managed to get along before I came, and it will get along after I am gone. A little while, and I shall not be. The birds will sing among the sycamore trees here by the river, but I shall not hear them. These woods will glow with the very fire of God, and these skies flame with his glory, but I shall not see it. Day and night, winter and summer, seedtime and harvest, will pass, each with its own peculiar charm, but I shall not be there to witness it. Other men will live in my house, other men will sit in my chair, other men will watch the sun set from my window, other men will go about the streets where I have gone and look upon the old, familiar places, other men—Ugh! Elisha, when you are prone to think too highly of yourself, and of your importance in the world, just stop and look up at God's far-off stars, that looked down upon Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and ask yourself, Where will I be a hundred years from now? That question under the stars takes the starch out of the best of us. A short horse is soon curried, and a short life is soon lived, and sooner forgotten. We all do fade as a leaf, and as leaves we return to dust; but God is the same, and His years shall not fail.

Do you know how the cathedrals of Europe were built, Elisha? Those Gothic dreams in stone, which lift their spires far above the puny habitations of men, which house the worship of generations and see so much human dust return to dust; they were not built in a day, or a year. They are not the work of one generation, but of many; not the work of one big man toiling alone, but of many little men working together. One generation quarried the stone, and another laid the foundation; and upon that

the superstructure rose, step by step, stone upon stone, slowly, painfully, one generation passing away and another generation coming, until finally the last stone was laid, and another masterpiece was added to the monuments of men. Some of them are not completed yet, though those who laid the first stones have long since returned to dust. So all the great works of men go up, and the great work of God goes on, in the world—the pyramids of Egypt, and the walls of Babylon, and the kingdom of heaven upon earth. God's workers are many, His work is one. You will take up where I leave off, Elisha, and some one else will take up where you leave off, and so on to the end.

You have asked for a double portion of my spirit, Elisha, and you shall have it, not from me, but from God who gave it to me; and yet I wonder if you know what you ask. I warn you, it is a dangerous possession. It has no mercy on flesh and blood. Your feet will be weary from far tramping over mountain passes and burning sands, but still it will urge you on, if there is a king to be rebuked or a wayfaring man to be succored. In vain human nature will cry out against it. It will not spare. It carries men whither it will. It has carried me to Ahab's court, when I had no hope of getting away alive. It does not stop at the hate of man or the petty spite of women. It led Jesus to the cross; and it leads all his followers thither, soon or late, sometimes in the flesh, always in the spirit. God spares not His prophets. But we should not complain, Elisha. He spares not Himself. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. There is no escape from the cross. The pathway of human progress leads ever to it, and the prophet is the pathfinder. It is not his business to pos-

sess the earth, but to redeem it; and redemption comes higher than possession. Men have gone far, and endured great privation and hardship, to possess the earth; but they have gone farther, and endured even greater hardship, to redeem it. The world comes honestly by its choicest possessions. They are not the result of chance or fortuitous circumstance. They come not except by toil and travail. Without shedding of blood, and sometimes even the sweating of it, there is no redemption or progress. Look back over the long road we have travelled, Elisha, and see for yourself. Almost every step of the journey has been wet with the tears of saints, and the sweat of pilgrims, and the blood of martyrs. I know not why it should be so, why it is that the kingdom of heaven comes so hardly upon earth; I only know that it is so.

Square your shoulders, Elisha, to receive this mantle. It will tax their strength to the uttermost. It is a more rigorous armour than the soldier's coat of mail, or the monk's coarse raiment. It is not for comfort, but for service. It is not to shelter you from the world, but to shelter the world from its sins and sorrows and sicknesses. All manner of men in all manner of straits, the hard-pressed and the heavy-laden, will run to it for sanctuary. Little children will seek shelter within its folds. Wayfaring men will come panting for cover from the burden and heat of the day. Blind men will cry after you, and lepers call from their dwelling among the tombs. You will meet prodigals in the far country, ragged, and wretched, and heartsick, and yet too proud to go back home. Behind and before, on the right hand and on the left, from the pool by the sheep-market where impotent men wait in vain for the moving of the waters, from the wayside where blind men sit and beg, from the tombs

where wild men tear at their chains, the world will reach out lame hands to touch the hem of your garment; and woe worth the day when it finds no virtue in the touch. The virtue is not in the mantle, nor in the man inside of it, but in the spirit of God which breathes through its folds. It is that which the world is seeking, and if it find it not, the mantle is but an empty shell, and the prophet's voice but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

Do you realize, Elisha, what it is that is coming upon you? It is not the shepherd's crook, or the magician's wand. It is the prophet's mantle. And who is the prophet, and what is his business with men? He is not here to build altars, or serve tables; he is not here to garnish the sepulchers of his fathers, or to leave monuments to his children. He is not here to administer sacraments, or to perpetuate the traditions of men. He is here to speak for God. That is his peculiar function, his chief end upon earth, and his solemn responsibility to high heaven. If he do not that, whatever else he may do, he has missed his calling; and if he do that, whatever else he may not do, he has fulfilled his mission. Write that large, Elisha, upon the posts of your door and upon the tablets of your heart, where it will be always before your eyes and in your thoughts, lest haply you forget your errand among men. No greater calamity can befall a man than that he lose sight of his chief end. Think of it, Elisha. To be on the way, and yet not know where you are going; to be in the world, and yet not know what you are here for! Can anything worse befall a man than that? I can think of nothing. The man who forgets that has lost his credentials, and can no longer give the world a reason for the life that is in him. He can never

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tell when his work is done, because he does not know what it is.

And it is no light thing to speak for God, Elisha. It lays a weight upon human speech almost too great for it to bear. To have men hanging upon your words, seeking the law at your mouth, listening for God's voice on your tongue! That is almost too much for flesh and blood. And yet that is the prophet's burden. That is the burden which I carried to Ahab, which Nathan carried to David, which Amos carried to Moab and Israel and Judah, which Jesus carried to Capernaum and Tiberias and Jerusalem, which Peter and James and John carried to the ends of the earth. You must carry it, Elisha, to great and small, to rich and poor, to good and bad, alike; taking not one jot from it, adding not one jot to it. Sometimes it will be glad news, and sometimes it will be sad news. Sometimes it will bear you down, when it carries the death sentence of a human soul, and sometimes it will bear you up, when it brings joy to the broken-hearted and recovery of sight to the blind; but whether it bring joy or sorrow, whether it mean life or death, whether it load your heart with lead or give wings to your feet, you must bear it. Such is the burden of the word of the Lord. God has no other organs of speech; no human voice with which He can speak to human beings. He had once, in Galilee long ago, but it was stilled on the cross. He must put this treasure henceforth in earthen vessels.

Weigh well what you say for God, Elisha. Listen long and anxiously for the still small voice before you let the world hear your own. It is so easy to mistake it. There are so many other subtle voices which sound so much like it, so many others which men would rather hear and which perhaps you would rather hear. There will be

many sweet whispers in your ear. Weigh well your words before you speak them. The world will take them for God's voice, because you stand in God's stead. If you speak falsely for Him, it will believe a lie; if you point in the wrong direction, it will take the wrong road at the parting of the ways. Beware, Elisha. It is a terrible thing to put a human soul on the wrong road, to misdirect a prodigal on his way back home. God forbid that you and I should ever have to answer for that. If it is a grievous thing to mince a human message, an order from a general to his soldiers, a dying message from a mother to her son, how much more grievous is it to mince God's message to the children of men.

I don't know what awaits me yonder across the river. It will all come upon me as a glad surprise. But I know what waits for you, Elisha, here on this side. I have been here these three score years and ten, and I know; and before we go, you to your day's work, I to my long home, let us tarry here in the cool, blue shadow of these hills and talk a little while of the land which lies behind me and before you, of the changes which come over it, of the lights and shadows which play upon it, of the generations which come and go in it, and how the kingdom of God comes to it. It is important that you learn to read the face of the sky, Elisha, that you may know when storms gather, and the face of the land, that you may know when spring comes, and summer, and winter; but it is much more important that you learn to read the face of the life which lies between the land and the sky, that you may know when day and night come to it, and seedtime and harvest, and the early and the latter rain, lest haply you be found reaping in the spring and sowing in the autumn. God made the land, and the lights which

shine upon it—the light which rules the day, and the lights which rule the night, and the light which rules the hearts of men; and to each He has given its season.

I know you are anxious to get to your work, Elisha, and you do well to be. Your day will be not a moment too long. The fields are white to the harvest, and the laborers are few. But be sure that your sickle is sharp before you thrust it in. Israel was in sore bondage in the days of Moses, and the yoke of Pharaoh pressed hardly upon their necks; but Moses remained forty years in the desert. The world was in sorer bondage in the days of Pilate, and the lost sheep of the house of Israel wandered upon the mountains without a shepherd; but Jesus remained thirty years at the bench. Better less work well done than more work but poorly accomplished. The time to think about life is at the beginning of it. It is too late at the end. It is all over then, and not a moment of it can be recalled. There are some things which never come back—the arrow that is flown, the word that is spoken, the life that is gone. We shall not pass this way again, Elisha. We live but once, and from it there is no appeal. So look with all your heart upon these mountains and rivers and plains, and live with all your might the few years upon earth which God gives you to live.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHANGING EARTH

I AM going the way of all the earth, Elisha—the way of the grass under your feet, and the stars over your head; the way of the Parthenon, and the pyramid of Cheops, and the temple of Solomon; the way of most of the work of man, and much of the work of God. Where are the flowers that bloomed in the springtime, and the leaves which fell from the trees in the autumn? Where is the grove of Daphne by the Orontes—the fountains that played there, the birds which sang there, the men and the maidens who walked and talked and laughed and made love there? Where indeed? Ask the winds that have passed over them, the earth that has swallowed them up. We toil and sweat to build cities, and plant gardens, and pile up monuments, only to have them crumble back to dust. But we should not complain, or charge God foolishly. It is so with much of His work—the leaves that He makes every summer, the clouds that He paints with such careful hand, the worlds which He gathers through millenniums out of the dust. If He does not spare His own work, we should not complain that He does not spare ours.

So runs the world away; away to the encroaching sands of the desert, and the undermining waves of the sea. But don't be alarmed, Elisha. Your house will not be left

unto you desolate. The world is going with me, but it is also remaining with you. It was here before I came, and it will be here after I am gone. God sweeps His house, but He does not leave it empty. Other things come to take the place of those that go. A little while and you will hear my voice no more, nor touch my hand; but you will hear other voices, and clasp other hands. The sun is sinking into the sea, but it will rise again out of the desert. The birds fly away at the approach of winter, but they come again at the approach of summer. The trees shed their leaves in the fall, but they put forth new ones in the spring. God keeps His covenant of day and night, and seedtime and harvest. He always has His man ready at the appointed time. He is never taken unawares. You are here to take up my work, Elisha, and He will have another there to take up yours when you lay it down. Never fear. And let us hope that each generation is a little better than its predecessor, and improves upon its work. God made better leaves this year than He made last, and also better men. You will be a better man than I have been, Elisha, and do a little better work; and so with the man who comes after you. God is not simply holding His own; He is marching on.

You will see a great show of change on every hand, Elisha, from east to west, from north to south, from green to red and gold and brown, from childhood to youth and from youth to old age; the world will pass by you in a seemingly endless procession—leaves blow on the wings of the wind, birds flying before the wrath of the storm, rivers running their everlasting journey to the sea, men and women, and even little children, hurried like dumb, driven cattle by the inexorable years; until you will be tempted to conclude that nothing is permanent. Flowers

bloom only to die. Rivers are gathered out of the sea, only to run back into it. Things come into sight, only to pass out of it again. Nothing remains. Dust they are, and to dust they return. Nature gathers up the dust, and flings it away with the same reckless hand.

> "So careful of the type she seems,
> So careless of the single life.
>
> "So careful of the type? but no.
> From scarped cliff and quarried stone
> She cries, 'A thousand types are gone,
> I care for nothing, all shall go'."

So it would seem, Elisha, on the face of it, whether you look at the face of the sky or the faces you pass on the street. The expression of both is constantly changing. Nature seem to care for nothing, and nature is but God at work. If it is not He, who is it? He "brings to life, He brings to death" with the same indifferent hand, caring, apparently, no more for the one than the other. That is the way it looked to Tennyson, and that is the way it looks to you and me, Elisha.

But Tennyson knew better in his sober moments. By the way, you will find him not very consistent, Elisha. He seems to talk out of both sides of his mouth, now this way, now that, because he was in a constant strait betwixt his faith on the one hand and his sight on the other. The old faith and the new knowledge met in him, and fought it out, and they almost tore the poor man's soul asunder. He saw things with clear eyes, and yet he could not believe what he saw. No man can, when he stops to think it through. We instinctively feel that there is something which does not appear to the naked eye, something which escapes even the most powerful lens;

that this everlasting circle from dust to dust again is not the real thing; that there is something which stands under it all, a final residuum which is never resolved.

What then does God care for? What does He keep, and what does He cast aside? What is the enduring substance, and what the passing shadow? You do well to find out, Elisha, and you will do well to remember. Every worker should know his material—the potter his clay, the artist his pigment, the prophet his human stuff. You are to be a worker in human clay, Elisha; and it is not one, but two. It is a rare mixture of the dust of the earth and the breath of God. "God made man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." That is the way He made the first man, and that is the way He will make the last one. There is no other way. It does not matter how He breathed it in, or how long it took Him; whether in a day by a single act, or by strange and mysterious processes through countless years. He breathed it in, and it is there, a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel. The seen and the unseen, the temporal and the eternal, meet in the human consciousness, but they do not meet in a clear-cut line, as the hills meet the sky. They shade off into each other, like day into night, and thereby hangs the difficulty of the prophet's task. It is sometimes hard to tell just where one leaves off, and the other begins. You will handle both perishable and imperishable material, Elisha, the dust of the earth and the breath of God, and you will need to know the one from the other, that you may put the emphasis in the right place. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and goes the way of all flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit, and shares the fate of all spirit. Don't make the mistake of building your house upon the sand,

Elisha; for the rain will fall, and the winds will blow, and the years will pass with corroding feet. It will fall, inevitably as autumn leaves, and great will be the fall of it, for you as well as for others. There is but one end to "all valiant dust," however valiant, "that builds on dust and guarding, calls not Him to guard." Soon or late, the dust will have its own. It is only a question of time.

Let us see, if we can, what it is in all this pageantry of life that passes, and what it is that remains, that we may lay our life upon sure foundations, and put the accent of our gospel upon the right syllable.

The thoughts of men change from generation to generation, but the facts about which they think remain very much the same. The same stars look down upon us as upon the ancient Magi, but we look up to them with different eyes. Astrology has changed to astronomy, and alchemy to chemistry, but the stars in their courses have not changed. Our fathers thought that the earth was flat, and we think it is round, not because the earth has changed its shape, but because men have revised their thoughts. The centre of the solar system has not shifted since Copernicus, it is only the thoughts of men that have shifted. Thinking does not make things so, nor keep them from being so. Don't forget that, Elisha. It makes a difference to the thinker, but it does not make any difference in the things. The earth remains the same, whether we think it round or flat, and God remains the same, whether we think Him many or one.

The fashions of the world pass away, but the world itself does not pass. It is the same head that we cover, whether we put on it a turban or a top hat, the same heart that we house, whether with homepsun or purple and fine linen. Men wear sandals to-day, and shoes to-morrow;

they lie down to eat in one generation, and sit up in another; they shake hands when they meet in one land, and bow their faces to the ground in another; but in all lands, and under all skies, the way of a man with a woman, and the way of a woman with a man is very much the same. The story of Samson and Delilah, of Solomon and the Shulamite, is repeated from land to land and from generation to generation. We no longer build walls about our cities, with chambers over the gates; but David still mourns over Absalom, and will not be comforted because he is not. "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son."

> "There is no far or near,
> There is no there or here,
> Nor any long ago,
> To that cry of human woe."

It is the everlasting cry after the prodigal son, whether it come from the lips of a king or a humble cotter. The first man Adam had a prodigal son, and perhaps the last man Adam will have one. The customs and conventions of life change, the manners of men, and their habits of speech, from generation to generation; but their human hearts beat to the same passions, and ache with the same pains, and faint under the same burdens, from one age to another, and from one world to the other.

Men satisfy their needs in different ways, but it is the same need that they satisfy, each in his own way. The dog laps up water with its tongue, the horse sucks it between its teeth, and man drinks it out of a cup; but it is the same water in each case, and it quenches the same thirst. We call God by different names, and bow down to Him at different altars, and worship Him after different forms; but it is the same God we seek, if haply we may find

Him. Whether we pray to Him on our feet or on our knees, with hands folded or uplifted, with faces toward Jerusalem or toward Mecca, we want very much the same things of Him, and He wants very much the same things of us. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." That is what David wanted of Him, and what more do we want? "What doth the Lord require of thee, O man, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." That is what God wanted of Israel three thousand years ago, and it is what He wants of us.

You will find that most of the boasted change in this world, Elisha, is only on the surface, that most of the differences between one generation and another are very largely superficial. Think not that the former times were better than these, simply because you cannot see any freckles on the peoples' faces. It is only because they are too far away. Distance covers a multitude of sins. And think not that your times are better than former times, because men wear better clothes, and live in better houses, and ride in automobiles instead of ox-wagons. It does not necessarily follow. There are changes, deep down and far-reaching, but they do not appear readily upon the surface. Those which appear to the naked eye from day to day are mostly evanescent and unimportant. The trees shed their leaves, but not their roots and branches. It is so with the tree of life. You will hear a great rustling in the woods, as if the very heavens were falling; but don't be deceived. It is "nothing but leaves," Elisha, nothing but leaves. The roots of the trees are still in the ground, and they take hold upon the very ribs of the earth; and the branches are still in the air, reaching up their fingers a little further toward heaven. We should rejoice to see

the trees put forth their leaves, and see them fall with sorrow; but we should not be too much encouraged by the one, or too much discouraged by the other. The production of leaves is not the main business of trees. That is only incidental to the day's work.

You will find motion everywhere, Elisha, where there is life. Only dead things are still. But motion is not necessarily progress. The crawfish moves, but it does not go forward. The oxen move on the threshing-floor, but they do not get anywhere; they continually find themselves back where they started out. Beware of the circle, Elisha. It is the motion that kills, and drives to the madhouse and jumping-off place. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually; and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whence the rivers came, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun." Poor man, he had got caught in the deadly circle, even though he was a king and had all the resources of the world at his command. He got up every morning to find things going the same old round of the day before, and he went to bed at night knowing that they would go the same old round on the morrow. He had travelled the same old circle, seeing the same old familiar sights, hearing the same old familiar sounds, meet-

ing the same old familiar faces, until he was sick to death of it all. God have mercy on a man when life comes to that. The world has been turned into a potter's wheel, and his life is crushed out upon it like clay.

Progress is motion forward, Elisha; motion in a certain direction, toward a given end. There may be eddies in the stream, and even temporary reactions from breakers; but the main current is ever forward toward the sea. Get into the main current of the river, Elisha, and add your strength to the strength of the stream. Don't be content simply to be in motion. Be sure that you are getting somewhere. The sea is constantly in motion, heaving, swelling, rising, falling, smiling in the sun, writhing in the storm, sobbing with the sadness of unnumbered shipwrecks in its depths; but most of it is lost motion. Only the main tides ever reach the land. That is the sad thing about all this running to and fro of men upon earth, Elisha. Most of it is lost motion. It does not get us anywhere. Consider the trees of the field, Elisha, how they grow, and how they serve. They really accomplish something through the season. All their budding and blooming and putting forth of leaves is not in vain. They have something to show for it in the fall. It is not that they get new leaves to take the place of the old ones; they will lose those in turn. They lose this year's leaves as they lost last year's; but at the end of the summer their branches are a little nearer the stars, and their trunks a little stronger, and their roots a little deeper in the earth, and the ground underneath them a little richer for the fallen leaves; the birds have sung among their branches, and sheep and cattle and wayfaring men have rested in their shade, and there is fruit perhaps for man and beast, and somewhere, in storehouse or barn or underneath the

sod, new seed for the life that is to come after. That is progress, and that is service.

If you go forward, Elisha, in a straight line and not in a circle, as it is to be hoped you will, you will be ever doing two things—you will be meeting new things, and leaving old things behind. That is not true of those who travel in a circle. After the first round, they see nothing that they have not seen before, nothing that they will not see again. But those who go forward are constantly seeing things for the first time, and also for the last time. Running streams do that, and flying birds, and growing men and women. It is incidental to all progress, and the forward traveller must be prepared to meet it. You will meet with accidents on your journey, Elisha, which you cannot foresee or prepare against. You will have to make the most of them when they come. But not so with the incidents which are inevitable to your journey. You can anticipate them, and be prepared to meet them. How shall we meet the new things, and after what manner shall we part with the old? Those are the questions, or rather the two halves of the same question, which will confront you at every step, and you will do well to have an answer beforehand. It will save you much delay, and many a foolish adventure.

There are the old things which you will be constantly leaving behind. Don't cry after them, Elisha, or try to keep them. They may be dear to you, and have proved faithful companions in the way, but don't waste any tears on them. It will not bring them back. It will only hold you back. Let the dead bury their dead, and the past have its own. Travel light, Elisha, with the least possible amount of baggage. What if the trees should try to keep all the leaves they have grown? And yet some good peo-

ple would load life with all the forms it has brought forth. That is why the world makes such slow progress. It is loaded down with dead leaves—old thoughts that have been outgrown, old creeds that are outworn, old forms and formulas that have had their day and served their purpose. Folks still cling to them for the sake of what they have done. Trees are wiser in their generation. They do not try to keep their old leaves. They do not shed them all at once. Some fall of their own weight in the fall, others are blown off by the winter winds, while others hang on until spring and are pushed off by the swelling buds; but they all go, soon or late, and give place to new ones. Only dead trees keep their old leaves. Last year's leaves are worse than useless, if they stay on too long. They are in the way of new leaves, and cumber the trees. Don't put new wine in old bottles, Elisha, or sew new cloth on old garments. Don't try to wear Saul's armour if it does not fit you. Be content with your simple stone and sling. To every man his own armour, and to every generation its own forms.

The past will lay strong hands upon you, Elisha, and hold on with a death grip. The hardest hold in all the world to break is the hold of a dying man. Old things will die hard, but let them die. They were good for their day, but their day is passed. Peace to their ashes. Don't forget the service they have rendered, or the lessons they have taught; but look not back. Remember Lot's wife. You may not turn to a pillar of salt, but you will turn to a fossil, and that is just as bad. We don't carry our school-books about with us after we leave school, but only the lessons we learned from them. The past is useful as a guidepost, but wayfaring men are not supposed to take the guideposts with them. In so doing, they would

only cumber themselves and rob those who come after them. Guideposts are simply to be read, and then left for other travellers who will be coming on.

Let the new things recompense you for the loss of the old, Elisha; and you will be continually coming to them, as surely as you will be leaving the old behind. Life hath its compensations. The world is new every morning, and the earth is new every summer, to those who have eyes to see it and a heart to understand. It may be that God is new every moment. Who knows? Perhaps that is the reason He never grows old, though He is eternal. A thousand years in His sight are but as a single day. Did you ever stop to consider, Elisha, what a terrible thing it would be for God to allow Himself to grow old? He cannot afford it, with all His eternal years on His hands. No more can we. We have too long to live. But we will grow old, inevitably and inexorably, if we do not let spring continually return to our hearts. It is here that we come upon the secret of perpetual youth. The old Spaniard was looking for it in the wrong place, and in the wrong way. It was too bad that he should have gone so far to seek something which he might have found nearer home. It is not in the New World any more than it is in the Old. What rainbow-chasers we are, Elisha, and what asses we make of ourselves, running over land and sea after wild geese when we have plenty of better ones in our own dooryard. What fools we think our fathers were in their day, and what fools will our children think we were in ours. The end of the rainbow is not above us, or beneath us, or beyond us. It is within us, in our secret hearts, where we are continually in contact with unseen and eternal things. It is there that the

fountain of youth flows fresh from the throne of God, and it is open to all.

Greet each new day with a glad heart, Elisha, and the new things which the day brings forth. Be glad of the flowers with their morning faces, and the birds with their early songs. They are God's messengers, running before Him, and singing as they run. God does not sound a trumpet before Him, but He sends messengers, to those who have ears to hear them. They will always be there waiting for you, Elisha, if you look for them, with their kindly ministry of courage and good cheer. They will sing you to sleep at night, and wake you in the morning. They will go with you to your work, however humble it may be if only it be honest, and hearten you with song. Their hands may be the hands of Esau, hairy and horny; but their voice is the very voice of God, and their music the gladness of the world.

Life is a great glad game, Elisha, to those who play it gladly; a high adventure, to those who enter upon it with a high heart. God speed you on your far journey, and bring you with joy to your journey's end. It will lead you over high mountains, and across burning sands. The sun will parch your lips, and the sands blister your feet. The shadows of passing clouds will darken your way, but be not dismayed; the clouds will pass, and the shadows with them. The world will cry to you, from the right hand, and from the left; but go not after it. Let your eyes look right on. Be strong, and of a good courage; and remember always that you carry with you wherever you go the same old human heart that beat in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and that will beat in all the children of men to the end of time. Keep it with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life; on it the world

registers its final changes, and in it the chief goods of life are stored. Can these changes be passed on to others, as we transmit the fashion of our faces or the color of our eyes? I do not know, Elisha. Doctors are disagreed. I only know that we take them with us whither we go, and that we take nothing besides. The final expression of life is in terms of character. That is all we will have to show for the life we have lived, all we will have to present to our God when we meet Him in judgment.

CHAPTER V

THE TWO COMMANDMENTS

I HAVE spoken to you of yourself first, Elisha, because you come first in the natural order of things. We are men before we are prophets, something which I fear we too easily forget. Life is more than work. We live before we work, and while we work, and after we work. It is possible that a man preach to others and yet himself be cast away. That was Paul's fear, and it ought to be the fear of everyone who speaks for God, and he ought to keep it constantly before his eyes. After all, the prophet's life is the most convincing thing about him. That is the gospel according to him, and whatever else he may have to say can only reinforce it.

Practise what you preach. That is well. But preach what you have practised. That is better. Practice it first, if it is practicable, and preach it afterward. Perhaps you will not care to preach it after you have tried it out on yourself. If prophets had always followed that rule, it would have saved the world many a foolish message. It has pleased God to save the world by the foolishness of preaching, but not by foolish preaching. There's a difference, Elisha; and the only way to tell the difference is to put it to the acid test of life. Time will tell, if you give it time enough. Look well to yourself first, that your life squares with your gospel, and then forget yourself ever afterward.

So, having paid our respects to the prophet, let us proceed to the business of prophesying, and especially the prophecy of new truth. Not that new truth is more important than old, but because it is more liable to be your business to preach it. God generally puts new wine in new bottles, and reveals new truth to young men. Not always, but as a rule. It was a young man who led Israel out of the wilderness into the Promised Land. Jesus was young when he walked by the sea and died on the cross. The witnesses who stoned Stephen laid down their garments at the feet of a young man by the name of Saul. And the world is still laying its garments at the feet of young men, and God is spreading his heavenly visions before their eyes. It was a young man who looked upon America for the first time, and turned the feet of civilisation toward the setting sun. It is not without significance that most of the great discoveries have been made by men under forty, and discovery is but the human side of revelation. Man discovers, God reveals. They are but reverse sides of the same process. Revelation is God's journey to man, discovery man's journey to God; and they are travelling toward each other at the same time. God is eternally young, and it is the eternal youth in man that discovers Him. Youth is adventurous. It hitches its wagon to wandering stars. It is young men who go on long journeys into strange lands, and come back with tales that startle the world out of its sleep. Old men prefer to remain at home by their comfortable fires. They shrink from the high seas. We cease to receive revelations after a certain age, not because the book of revelation is closed, but because our minds are no longer open. Young men see visions, and old men dream dreams. Visions are of the future, dreams of the past. So leave

old men to their dreams, Elisha, and their comfortable beds, but go thou and look for heavenly visions. And the heavens are full of them, to those who have eyes to see.

There are two commandments which ought to be written over the door of the man who lives in his house by the side of the road, and tries to be a friend to man, and that is where the prophet's tent is pitched. He lives hard by the King's highway, where all the world passes by in endless procession. God goes by on His many errands upon earth, and also Satan, going to and fro in the land and travelling up and down in it. Truth travels that way, and likewise falsehood. Wolves go by, sometimes in sheep's clothing, and sometimes in their own garb. And they all knock at the prophet's door, for shelter over night, or sanctuary from the pursuer. And over the door, inside and outside, where both he and they can see them, should be these two commandments:

> "BE NOT FORGETFUL TO ENTERTAIN STRANGERS: FOR IN SO DOING SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED ANGELS UNAWARES."

This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it.

> "BE NOT NEGLECTFUL TO PRESENT STRANGERS: FOR IN SO DOING SOME HAVE PRESENTED ANGELS UNAWARES."

To these two commandments let me add a word of caution, Elisha. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, and to present them to your friends; but be careful how you do it. It is a fine art, which requires great grace of

speech and deftness of touch. Many a new truth has been queered by a bad introduction.

On these two commandments, and the word of caution which goes with them, hang all the law and the prophets, whether the strangers be wayfaring truths or wayfaring men. These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and before thine eyes; and thou shalt teach them diligently to those who come after thee, as I am teaching them diligently to thee; and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest among the prophets, and when thou walkest in the way; and thou shalt write them on the lintels of thy door, and upon thy gates, that they may be before thine eyes when thou goest out, and when thou comest in. To welcome strangers into his house, and present them to those who come to seek the law at his mouth, that is the prophet's whole duty to the future. Not simply to receive new truth himself—that is every man's duty, but to minister it to others; that is the prophet's duty, over and above the duty of other men. And it is a great privilege, as well as a grave responsibility. They go together, as they generally do in this world.

How would you like to have been in the shoes of the Baptist, Elisha, and to have had the chance to run immediately before Jesus, and prepare the minds of men for his coming? Among those that are born of women, there has not been a greater than John, nor one who has had a greater privilege. And yet that is just the prophet's place in every generation. That will be your place and your rare privilege, Elisha, your everyday duty and your sole business upon earth, to run before your Lord in His coming, and announce Him to your day and generation in its own language and in terms of its own thought! And there is no higher calling under high heaven. You should

be aware of the pressing importance and commanding dignity of it, lest you become weary and faint in your mind when the running is hard. It matters not whether we run before Him the first time, or the last time, if only we run, and lift up our voices as we run. Wherever you go, whatever gates you enter, at whatever doors you knock, it will be yours to bring the kingdom of God nigh to men. To every man you meet on the street, or greet in the way, you should be able to say, as Jesus said to the open-minded lawyer, Thou are not far from the kingdom of heaven; it is near, and the door is open. Whether they heed it or not, will be their business; whether they hear it or not, will be yours.

We are the successors of the apostles, heirs of the same calling and ministers of the same Gospel, whether we can trace our ecclesiastical descent back to them or not. Our business is the same, but the nature of it is different, not because the Gospel has changed, but because times have changed. It was their duty to bring a new Gospel to an old age, it is ours to bring an old Gospel to a new age. It was an old world in which Paul lived, and to which he spake. Its day was dying in the west. Its religion was a dead letter, its philosophy a vain quest, its ethics a lost cause. The eyes that looked out of its windows were darkened, and the sound of its grinding was low. Mourners went about its streets without comfort, and men went to their long home without hope. And the Gospel was new, fresh from the cross and its triumph over the grave. Everywhere men heard it for the first time. It was really news to them, and good news at that. Gladly it rang in ears long used to the platitudes of Pharisees and Sophists, and gladly they heard it, whether from the lips of Jesus or of Paul.

It is a new age in which you live, Elisha, and to which you shall speak. It is the heir of all those that have gone before it, but it is new. It has burned its bridges behind it. Its future is all uncharted. Old things have passed away, and new things have not yet come. It is all at sea, and a stormy sea at that. And you will preach to it an old Gospel. Everywhere you go, men will have heard it before, many of them hundreds of times. But be not deceived, Elisha, nor magnify your office any the less on that account. The Gospel has lost none of its power, nor has the human heart lost any of its need. Those who have lived all their lives within sound of the Gospel are just as hopeless without it as those who have never heard it before. Indeed, the most hopeless man in all the world is the man to whom the good news has become an old story, and yet remains an idle tale. There is more hope of a heathen man than of him. And yet that is just the man you will have to reach, Elisha—Gospel-hardened from long hearing of it. To make the old story fresh to that man, and bring the impact of its message to bear upon his consciousness at a different angle, that is the hard task of him who is called upon to preach an old Gospel to a new age.

CHAPTER VI

ANGELS IN DISGUISE

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for in so doing some have entertained angels unawares."

We may not know who spoke those words, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Barnabas; but we know of whom they were spoken. There could be but one. We recall at once the old pastoral scene at Mamre—the venerable patriarch at his tent door in the heat of the day, his wife within preparing the midday meal, his flocks and herds about him under the shelter of the friendly trees, and before him the length and breadth of the land stretching away in alternating wady and meadow to the distant hills. Out across those parched uplands, down into the dry wadies, over the hills and far away, ran the long trails, bare to the noonday sun. They had been made originally perhaps by the wary feet of wolf and jackal, and after them had come sheep and cattle, and after them the shepherd and his dog, and after them caravans of camels, merchants, and wayfaring men from many lands. The old patriarch himself had followed those trails from his old home in the east to this distant promised land by the sea.

Worn and dusty from the tramping of many feet, deserted now by man and beast, the solitary trails lay upon the hills, open at both ends, to the sea on the one hand, to the river on the other. All sorts of travel and traffic came and went there—shepherds and their sheep on their

daily journey to the hills, beasts of burden on their way from Damascus to Egypt, wandering Bedouins upon all manner of doubtful errands bent, warlike Arab bands faring forth to victory or defeat, prodigals going out to the far country or returning from it in shame. And hard by those solitary trails, under the friendly tree, before his hospitable tent, sat the old patriarch, his door open to all comers, whether from the tents of Kedar or from the presence of God. No one was turned away empty.

And to that tent door, to the shelter of that friendly tree, there came three wayfaring men. Perhaps there was nothing in their outward appearance to indicate that they were not as other men. They asked no questions, and told no tales. They wore no wings, nor carried any silver trumpets. Were they kinsmen from the old home, or strangers from the new land? It mattered not. They had travelled far, and were foot-sore and weary. The old patriarch ran to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, after the manner of the ancient east, and prayed them to accept the hospitality of his tent. They demurred, but he would not be denied. To that end they had come, and for that purpose he had pitched his tent hard by those open trails. His wife prepared of the best of the tent, his servants brought of the fatlings of the flock, and the old patriarch himself ministered to their wants with his own hands. And when they had broken bread with him, he saw them on their way; and as they were taking leave of him, it was somehow borne to him, how we may not know, that these three were wont to stand in the presence of God, and were now on his errands upon earth. He had entertained three of God's angels unawares, and sent them rested and refreshed on their way.

It is an old story, Elisha, but it is not out of date. The

friendly tree still stands there at the crossroads of the world, and underneath it is the place of the prophet's tent. Not in the lowlands, with their limited range of vision, but upon the heights, where the earth meets the sky in rolling lines at great distances and the long trails lie open to the world's end. There is the prophet's watch, out under the open sky, above the bare backs of the hills which shut in other men, with nothing between him and God's heavens but the branches of his friendly tree, nothing between him and the distant hills but the transparent air, nothing between him and God's messengers but the open road. His tent door should command the length and breadth of the land, and it should be always open. "See, I have set thee a watchman upon the walls." That is God's commission to the prophet. Not down in the street, where men toil and sweat, but upon the walls, where the vigils of the day and night are kept. Men call to him from the street, Watchman, what of the night? And he calls back, The night cometh, and also the day; the night to some, the day to others. He is a prophet of both good and evil, because both are there within his ken. The world is getting better, and it is getting worse—better for some, and worse for others; and the prophet must declare what he sees.

The prophet is God's watchman, and the watchman's place is upon the walls. Other men must go down into the street, even down into the earth. They must work on the ground, and under the ground. They must go down to the sea in ships, and down into the valleys to plough and sow and reap. They must be shut within four walls. They must put thatch and tile between them and the open sky. They must bend over benches, and pore over ponderous ledges. They must tend furnaces, and serve tables,

and keep the many wheels of industry going. They cannot look up from their work. If they do, they are liable to lose a finger, or a foot, or their life. They must keep their faces ever earthward, and go about with their eyes upon the ground. Their living, even their very life, depends upon it. Who is to announce the night watches to these men, and keep the altar fires burning? They cannot do it themselves. They are too busy with the furnace fires. Some must watch while others work, and while others sleep, and while others play. So runs the world away. And that is the business of God's watchman. He is not here to buy and sell, or sow and reap. Not that He is too good to do either. The Master worked with His hands for thirty years, and to the last day of His life He did not hesitate to take a hand at the nets when it was necessary; but that was not His mission upon earth, and it is not the prophet's mission in any age. His business is to watch; and anything that takes him from the walls, or keeps his eyes from the distant hills, turns him aside from his chief end upon earth.

And every man has his place of business, Elisha, best suited to his particular kind of work. The market-place is for those who buy and sell, and the open field for those who sow and reap. The fisherman's place is by the sea, and the husbandman's among the vines. The farmer could not do his business on the sea, nor could the sailor do his on the land. Each would be at a disadvantage at the other's place of business, and yet each is thoroughly at home in his own place. And so the prophet has his place of business, and that place is on the heights, because watching can better be done there than anywhere else. It is there that the first rays of the sun fall, and the last rays linger. It is there that the distant sail is first seen, and

the distant ships disappear first over the world's edge. It is there that coming events cast their shadows before, and leave their trail behind. It is there that the air is clearest, and the outlook unobstructed. It is there that the affairs of man seem smallest, and the affairs of God largest; there that we are farthest from the earth, and nearest to the stars.

Pitch your tent there, Elisha, high above the puny habitations of men, and let nothing take your eyes from the open road. If you look away for a moment, one of God's messengers may get by you unobserved. The road leads from one end of the earth to the other, and it is so much farther to the world's end than it used to be, and there is so much more travel on the road. All the world will pass your door, and God will pass with the rest. He may be on His way to Sodom, or on His way to Calvary. He is still going to and fro in the earth, upon this errand and that, and He does not always travel in state. Most often not. He did not in Jesus. He was born between two camels, and died between two thieves. He worked with his hands at a humble trade. He went about on foot, unannounced and unattended. His followers were for the most part unlearned and ignorant men, as learning went in those days. He consorted with publicans and sinners, the disowned and disinherited of earth. He seemed to be more at home with them than he was with scribes and Pharisees. He went to their houses, and ate and drank with them, much to the scandal of respectable society. He put on no airs even with the most humble folk. Little children were not afraid of him. The tragedy of Israel was a tragedy of mistaken identity. She did not recognize her Lord when He came. He came from the wrong direction, and with the wrong mien. She was looking for Him

to come out of the heavens with power and great glory, and He came from Nazareth in the guise of a carpenter. He was hidden from her eyes because they were holden with the glitter and glamour of earthly things. The pride of her heart deceived her.

And the tragedy of Israel has been repeated in almost every age and among almost every people. The world does not recognise its great souls until after they are dead and gone, because appearances are against them, and the world judges by appearances. Most all prophets have been without honour in their own country and in their own lifetime. We garnish the sepulchers of the prophets which were sent to our fathers, and then turn around and stone those which are sent to us. That has been the story of prophets and people from the beginning—the story of Socrates and Athens, the story of Jesus and Jerusalem, the story of Dante and Florence. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou hadst but known in this thy day——" That is the eternal lament of the prophet to his people. God is everlastingly taking the world by surprise because He travels in disguise.

Take care, Elisha, that you be not deceived. All is not gold that glitters. The world will masquerade before your eyes. Wolves will pass in sheep's clothing, and asses in lions' skins. Heroes will go by in homespun, and rogues in purple and fine linen. Be not forgetful to take in strangers, but be careful that they do not take you in. About the only difference between a rogue and an honest man to the naked eye is that the rogue can put on the best face. Keep your eyes open, Elisha. The hands may be the hands of Esau when the voice is the voice of Jacob. Judge not according to appearances. They are deceitful above all things and desperately misleading. Man looketh

upon the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart; and the prophet must look with the very eyes of God, if he is to speak with God's voice. If he does not see clearly, he is liable to speak falsely. He must be able to see angels where others see only ordinary men, and only ordinary men where others see angels. The Pharisees deceived others, but Jesus was not mocked. He saw through them. He was not deceived by their long faces and long prayers. He saw the dead men's bones on the inside. He preferred an honest sinner to a dishonest saint any day. If there was one thing He could not endure it was cant and hollow pretence. He condemned it in words which burn and blister to this day.

The prophet should have not only range of vision, but penetration as well. He should look far out upon life, and also far into it. He may not be able to foretell the future with exactness of date, but he should be able to read the meaning of the present with unerring vision. Whatever knowledge of distant events he may have will come from a wise understanding of those which are near by. Insight is the father of foresight. The future is but a continuation of the present, and the only way to forecast it with any degree of accuracy is to project the present into it. All else is but idle conjecture. The world is not a still lake, but a running stream, and there is a main current in the stream. If the prophet fails to sense the direction of current events, his forecast of the future will go wide of the mark. And the main current of events does not always appear upon the surface. There are eddies and counter currents. Straws tell which way the wind is blowing, but they do not tell what kind of a wind it is. It may be only a local breeze, or it may be one of God's high winds which blow from one end of the earth

to the other. Local breezes vary from day to day. They turn about continually in their circuits. They do not get us anywhere. They blow us west to-day, and back east to-morrow.

The prophet must not be blown about by local breezes. He must set his sail to the great trade winds which blow ever in the same direction, and their course is not indicated by straws. He must look for other signs, and observe them more closely, if he is to keep his bearings. It is here that his insight comes in and determines his foresight. He must be able to see into things and through them to what lies beyond them. He must see the face behind the mask, the kernel within the husk. Nature does not put her most precious treasures on the outside. She is careful not to cast her pearls before swine. She hides the tree under the bark, the seed inside of the fruit, the oyster within the shell. God does the same with his heavenly treasures. He puts them in earthen vessels. He sometimes clothes his great souls in homely bodies, and sets his great events in mean surroundings. The civilised world dates its history from an event which took place in a stable. Before that event all fingers point forward, since that event all fingers point backward. It is the silent witness of the ages to the fact that in that event the human race, all unconsciously at the time, passed the turning point in its career. We are not sure just what happened there, or how it happened; but, whatever it was, we are convinced that something took place there that December night under those Syrian stars that will never take place again in the history of this world. And so we put our fingers there upon that elect point of time, and count backward and forward, to the things which happened before and the things which have happened since.

And yet the world was not wakened from its slumbers to witness the event. Herod slept on in his palace, and the Roman guard in their tower, only a stone's throw away, utterly unaware that a babe was born that night who would eventually turn their whole world upside down. The camels chewed their cuds quietly by, and looked on with unknowing eyes. Never a bugle sounded, and not even a cock crowed. There was a song on the air, and a light in the sky, but no one saw it or heard it but a few simple shepherds out upon the hills. Beware, Elisha, lest God get into His world when you are fast asleep, and you go on as if nothing had happened.

The prophet's watch is on the frontier of life, where great men are in the making and mighty movements are taking shape; and it is just there that the course of events is so deceiving. Progress is from the ground up. It enters the horn at the little end, and comes out at the big end. Retrogression goes the other way. And the world's attention is fixed upon the big end of the horn, because there is so much more noise there. Big men and big events get in at the other end while its back is turned. That is why it so often mistakes the course of events, and takes the wrong end of the road. God generally begins in a small way. He did at Bethlehem. All great forward movements proceed from small beginnings to large proportions. The world's great rivers begin in little mountain streams. Many of its great books have been written in garrets and prison cells. Most all of its great movements and most all of its great men have had humble origins. A Galilean carpenter spoke to a few fishermen at the Jordan, and the kingdom of heaven had commenced upon earth. A handful of Pilgrims land upon a barren rock, and a great nation is born in the west.

It is this misleading character of the course of events that tests the prophet's eyes so severely. He must have the rare gift of knowing what God is about when He begins. Any fool can tell what He has done when it is finished. The prophet must anticipate the course of events, if he is not to be the hero of a lost cause. Judgment should begin at the house of God, and with the man of God. Every great work of God, and every great hope of man should find him first. And they will if he is in his watch-tower where he belongs. It should be his face, and not another's, that catches the first rays of the rising sun; his voice, and not another's, that calls the first watch of the morning; his hand, and not another's, that lights the altar fires of a new day. He is God's herald of the dawn, and woe to him if it find him asleep on his watch.

Not that the prophet can keep his eyes always on the stars. His feet are upon the earth, at the same time that his head is in the air, and there are snares and pitfalls in the way, for the feet of prophets as well as for those of other men. He must watch where he is going, if he is not to fall in a ditch. But it is much more important that he watch where God is going. His feet are upon the earth, at the same time that His head is in the air, and there are snares and pitfalls in the way, for the feet of God no less than for those of men. And the prophet does not have to neglect his own way to see God's way. His way and God's way are one, because God's way should be his way; and he can best find out his own way by discovering God's way and following it. He should seek that by all means, and when he has found it, follow it at all costs.

Seeing then that such is the prophet's place among men,

such his peculiar business upon earth, what manner of man should he be, and what should be his peculiar gifts? Four things he must have, if he is to see for men, clearly and concisely, and a fifth, if he is to speak for God, fearlessly and unflinchingly—a seeing eye, an open mind, an understanding heart, a willing will, and a tongue that fears only to speak a lie.

CHAPTER VII

A SEEING EYE

We have five senses, and we use all of them more or less in our daily business; but upon which one should we place the emphasis? Which one is most useful to the prophet in his business?

There is no doubt about it, Elisha. God does not leave us in the dark. He puts his finger upon it at once. The first thing He does to a prophet is to test his eyes. "Amos, what seest thou?" "A basket of summer fruit." "What kind of fruit, Amos—good or bad?" "Bad, Lord, very bad." "That will do, Amos; go and speak to the house of Israel, and show them their sins."

That is the way the shepherd of Tekoa got his commission. Not by the traditions of men, or the laying on of hands, but by grace of his eyes. He was not a prophet, or the son of a prophet, as prophets went in those days, or as they go in these days, for that matter, Elisha.

He had never seen inside of the schools. He held no credentials from synagogue or temple. He was only a simple herdsman and gatherer of wild figs; but he could see, though Abraham was ignorant of him, and Israel acknowledged him not. He had lived out in the open with the sheep and the stars and God, and had kept the dust out of his eyes. He knew sin when he saw it, and was not afraid to call it by its right name; and that was more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

The prophet's chief and choice possession is his eyes. They are the windows of his soul, and the open gate of heaven. Vision, Elisha, is the supreme prophetic gift. Nothing can avail for the lack of it, nothing atone for the loss of it. God will accept no substitutes. It is the one thing needful. What scent is to the hound, what hearing is to the fox, what wing power is to the eagle, that sight is to the prophet. It may be insight, or it may be foresight. They are not two gifts, but two sides of the same gift; and so forthtelling and foretelling are but two functions of the same office. Not eloquence, or zeal, or even faith, but vision is that which sets the prophet apart from other men. That is the hand of God upon him. Others may have to walk by faith, but he should walk by sight; not the sight of his eyes, but the sight of his heart. He is not a table-server, though he may sit at tables, or even serve them upon occasion. He is not a time-server, though he lives in certain times and should be contemporary with them. He is not an orator, though he may speak with an eloquent tongue; he is not a scholar, though he may have all knowledge and understand all mysteries; he is not a philanthropist, though he may bestow all his goods to feed the poor; he is not a martyr, though he may give his body to be burned; he is not a pastor, though he may have the care of souls. He is at heart a seer, and whatever zeal or eloquence or knowledge he may have is useful only in so far as it aids and abets his eyes. If his other possessions obstruct his vision, or deflect it from its true course, they are in his way, and he were better off without them.

You can make a conventional minister out of a frock coat and a college curriculum, but it takes more than that to make a prophet. A college may help him, or it may

hinder him, but it can never make him. Only God can do that. Are prophets born or made? Neither, Elisha. They are called. Born before they are called, and made after it. They may be called from their mother's womb, or from the catching of fish or the keeping of sheep; but they are called, and hold their office only by grace of their calling. If a prophet is called of God, let men take care that they keep hands off him; if he is not called, let them beware how they lay hands on him. Whatever is done without him should be only a seal and a sign of what has been done within him. Some ministers are prophets, and some prophets are ministers. The two do not always go together. More's the pity. Clothes do not make the man. No more does culture make the prophet. It takes the breath of God, and the eye of the eagle. Did you ever examine an eagle's eye, Elisha? There's a far away look there in their clear depths, not unlike that in the light of the distant stars. It comes of long looking from great heights over the bare backs of mountains, where continents end and rivers run out to the sea. You will find the same look in the eyes of God's prophets, and they come by it in the same way.

Can you see, Elisha? That is what God wants to know, and that is what men want to know when they come to seek the law at your mouth. Men do not care to consult a blind oracle. Can you see the dawn before it comes? Can you see the cloud before it rises above the horizon? Can you hear the birds singing before they leave their southern home? Can you see things before they arrive? That is the question. Anybody can see things which are in sight, but you must be able to see them before they are in sight. Others have eyes for coming events, but the prophet must have eyes for the shadows which they cast

before. If you are to endure the hardships of the visible, you must be able to see Him who is invisible. If you are to be brave in the face of the enemy, when the hearts of other men are failing them for fear, you must be able to see the unseen hosts of the Lord round about the armies of Israel. If you are not to be scared by things, you must be able to see through them. The prophet must see God face to face, and he must be able to see men, not as they seem to be, but as they really are. He must not be deceived by the masks which they wear. Would you know a heavenly vision, Elisha, if you were to meet it in the road? What is more, would you know it if you were to see it in a human face? Perhaps that is where most heavenly visions appear. The heavens will open to you rarely, Elisha, but the faces of men are always open to you. Can you tell when you see a human soul look out of its window in distress? It is well to be able to read Greek and Latin, and know what men thought a thousand years ago; but it is far better to be able to read human faces, and know what men are thinking now. The eyes of men, Elisha, what secrets they tell to him who has a seeing eye.

Not clearness of title, but clearness of eye is what God wants; not breadth of phylacteries, but breadth of sympathy; not unbroken apostolic succession, but unobstructed prophetic vision. Not that a prophet should despise apostolic succession. Nor should he be satisfied with it. The Pharisees traced their descent back to Abraham, and could read their titles clear to Moses' seat. They had enlarged the borders of their garments until there was hardly room for them to pass on the streets, more especially since they required such a large margin between them and other men. But they were as blind as bats. They did not know the Son of God when they saw him. They actually mistook

him for a son of Satan. If the light that is in a prophet be darkness, how great is that darkness. Blindness is the besetting danger of prophets, and it is the unpardonable sin. Beware of it, Elisha. God can forgive anything but that. Some of his prophets have been slow of speech, and he has borne with them. Some of them have been unlearned and ignorant men, and he has been patient with their plodding wits. But a blind prophet he cannot abide. It is a sad day when Balaam's ass sees the heavenly vision before he does—a sad day for Balaam, and a sadder day for the ass. God have mercy on the beast that is ridden by a blind prophet. He is liable to ride it upon a flaming sword or headlong over a precipice at any moment; not because he is cruel, but because he is blind. And God have mercy on the people who are led by a blind prophet. He is liable to lead them straight to destruction with the best of intentions. If the blind lead the blind, it is more than likely that they will all together go into the ditch.

That is what happened to Israel. She was misled to her doom. It was her misfortune that she had blind leaders in the day of her visitation. It was not the common people who killed Jesus. Not the rank and file of Israel. They heard him gladly, and gladly would they have made him their king—the wrong kind of a king, to be sure, but the only kind that they knew anything about. They misunderstood him and the nature of his kingdom, but they were ready to follow him to the world's end. They were frightened away from him at the last, like sheep when their shepherd is smitten, but they were never unfaithful to him at heart. It was the Pharisees who hounded him to his death, and who gave themselves no rest day or night until they had put him on the cross. It was not Galilee that cried for his blood; it was Jerusalem,

and it was an inspired cry. The scribes and Pharisees were behind it. They put it into the people's mouth to ask for Barabbas instead of Jesus. The common people asked for a king, and the Pharisees gave them a thief. Israel did not wantonly disown her Lord. She was betrayed into it by those who ought to have known better. She took the wrong road at the parting of the ways, and has been a wandering Jew ever since; and she took it because her leaders told her it was the right road.

It is a terrible thing to misdirect a people, Elisha, and make them miss their appointed way and their appointed mission upon earth. It is that which lays such a weight of responsibility upon the prophet's shoulders. He is the watchman upon the walls. He watches while other men sleep. The world looks out upon the future through the windows of his soul, and he should see to it that they are kept perfectly clear. The pathway into the future should be kept open at all costs. Wherever the windows of heaven are open, wherever a ray of light is shining through, wherever new facts are being brought to light, there should the prophet be with his clear eyes, looking if haply God has vouchsafed a new truth to the children of men. Not that he should be a specialist in every department of human knowledge. He cannot be. Life is too short, and his work is too pressing, and the field of knowledge is too vast. If he knows the whole counsel of God for his generation, he will not have time for much else. He may have time for a hobby, but not for a specialty, outside of his own particular field. There's a difference, Elisha. A man mounts a hobby, and rides it whither he will; but a specialty is liable to mount the man, and ride him whither it will. It makes all the difference in the world who is in the saddle. It is permitted a prophet

that he should have a hobby, but he should not let it take the bit in its teeth and run away with him. The prophet may leave his work to refresh his spirit with other things, but only that he may return to it with renewed vigour. The Lord is a jealous God. He will have no other gods before Him, or even beside Him. He will not share His kingdom with another. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Few men can do more than one thing well. Paul could not. No more can you, Elisha. No man can serve two masters, or give his whole heart to two things at one and the same time. One or the other is bound to suffer. He must choose between them. The prophet's eye should be single, that his whole soul may be full of light.

To every man his own particular work, and to every work its own particular worker. The work of the prophet is one, and the work of the scientist is another. Not that there should be any conflict between them. They are workers together. The times are out of joint somewhere when the paths of any two of God's workers cross each other. They should run parallel, not contrary the one to the other. One worker should supplement the work of the other, but neither can ever take the place of the other. It is one thing to discover the origin of life, and quite another thing to give it direction and lofty aspiration. Don't leave the Gospel to serve tables, Elisha, whatever may be on them, or to dig for fossils, or to experiment with radium. Leave that to others. But go thou and preach the kingdom of God. Those who dig for fossils are liable to become fossilised. What the world needs is not a walking encyclopedia, but a living voice speaking for God to a crooked and perverse generation.

The prophet may not engage in the experiments of others, but he should not be blind to them, or indifferent

to their results. He must keep to his own particular task, but that does not mean that he should be indifferent to the tasks of others. He should rejoice in the fruit of other men's labours. He cannot plough in all fields, but he can enter into the labours of others and make them supplement his own. He cannot go on every voyage of discovery, but he can speed the discoverer on his way and welcome him back home, and rejoice with him in the new worlds which he has discovered. He should look up from his work to see what other workers are doing. He should be among the first to see new truth when it is brought to light. It should be visible to him the moment it appears above ground, because his watch-tower should command the length and breadth of the land, and his clear eye should scan narrowly everything in sight. He should never be caught napping by a new discovery.

By all means, the prophet should be the first to see the possible bearing of a new truth upon his own particular field, and that is something which he has too often been the last to see. Many of the great discoveries which have enlarged the boundaries of the Church, and have added materially to the furniture of her life, have been forced upon her at the point of the sword; and the sword has entered into the souls of those who brought the truth to her doors. She has not always thanked them for their pains. Quite the contrary sometimes. She has made them pay dearly for her enlightenment. She has mistaken the new-comer for an enemy, when in reality it was a friend in disguise. She has received the truth, not gladly but grudgingly, over her own protest and against her will; and very often it has turned out that a Church convinced against her will is of the same opinion still. She insisted upon believing that the earth was flat, long after

it was proved to be otherwise. Could not she see that it was flat? And yet she has discovered that a round earth is much better suited to her purpose than a flat one. What is her business in the world? To bring the kingdom of God upon earth. But you cannot put the kingdom of heaven upon a flat earth. There is no way around to your brother on the other side.

And so with the Copernican astronomy. It had to fight for its life against prejudice and preconceived opinion and intrenched interest; and yet it has pushed the skyline of the Church out immeasurably in all directions. The universe has been a different place since our little planet was dethroned from the centre of it, and it will never be the same again. For better, for worse, we have been turned out of doors among the stars; and we will eventually make ourselves at home among them. And so with this new discovery of the process of creation; call it evolution, or what you will. The Church has fought it with hammer and tongs, contesting every inch of ground which she has given; and yet who knows but that it will turn out greatly to her advantage, when it has been purged of the excrescences which cling to all new discoveries and properly assimilated into her thought? There was not room enough for the future in the old Ptolemaic universe, and there is not time enough for the past according to the old chronology.

And who have been the leaders in this long, running fight against these new discoveries? Not always, but too often, they have been found among the prophets whom God has set to be watchmen upon the walls. To their shame be it spoken. The race has had to fare forward against the combined weight of those who ought to have been its forerunners. Its progress has been blocked upon

the frontier by those who were put there for the express purpose of keeping the pathway into the future open. They have turned from the blazing of trails to the building of fences against further progress. Who is so blind as the prophet who will not see the truth, who will not look at new light because it hurts his eyes, who is frightened by the very things he is set to see, who mistakes the turn in the road for the end of the journey and refuses to go any farther?

Perhaps it is just as well that the truth has to fight for its life. There is no especial reason why it should be exempted from the general struggle of life in which all living things engage. That is the way the chaff is winnowed from the wheat, and the truth is distinguished from error. But it is unfortunate, to say the least of it, when its foes are those of its own household.

This is rather humble pie for prophets, Elisha; but we might as well eat it and have done with it. There is no use blinking the facts of history. There they are before our eyes, as plain as the nose on our faces. It is one of those honest confessions which are supposed to be good for our souls, though rather humiliating to our pride as well as derogatory to our calling.

But such things ought not to be, Elisha. The prophet should not be a mere camp-follower. He is a pathfinder, by the very nature of his office; that, or nothing. If he cannot keep step with God, he should at least get out of the way of those who would. The ancient shepherd went before his sheep, not after them; and, by his own word, Jesus came in the likeness of a shepherd. He went on before his disciples, to Jerusalem, to Gethsemane, to Calvary. And He is still going on before them. And He calls men to come after Him, and lead others in the way of His steps.

CHAPTER VIII

AN OPEN MIND

We must not only have eyes, but we must use them, Elisha, if we are to get the full benefit of them. Otherwise, we might as well not have them, for all the good they will do us. It is to the open-eyed man that the vision comes. Paul's companions on the road to Damascus did not see anything. They only heard a noise, and they did not know what that meant. God cannot get into a closed house.

There was no open vision in Israel in the days of Samuel, and the people perished for lack of it. They had eyes, but they saw not. The heavens were shut up over their heads. They had lost the distant view. They had grown short-sighted from too much looking at things that were near by. They had no foresight into the future, nor any insight into the present. We are not surprised to find that, when they came to choose a king, they took the biggest man in sight. That was just like them. They thought there was no more to a man than what they could see with the naked eye. Even Samuel came very near making the same mistake. God had to warn him to beware of outward appearance. It sometimes deceives the very elect.

There was no open vision in the days of Jesus, and the Pharisees killed him for lack of it. They thought they were doing God service. That was the pity of it. It is

not enough that we be sincere, Elisha. We may be sincerely mistaken. Their Messiah was just as dead, and stayed dead just as long, as if they had killed him with their eyes open. Thinking does not always make things so. It is necessary that we think in the right direction; otherwise, the more we think, the farther we get from the truth. We may travel toward God, or we may travel away from Him. It depends upon which end of the road we take. Roads have two ends, and they lead in opposite directions. We must keep open house, and be sure that our windows are open toward Jerusalem, if we are to think God's thoughts after Him.

What do we mean by an open mind? It is the antithesis of a closed mind. But what is a closed mind? Perhaps we can best illustrate by means of the open and closed shop. What do we understand by a closed shop? It is a shop that is closed to nonunion labour. Men get together and organise labour into unions, and set the seal of the organisation upon it, and then close the shop against all else. The only access to the shop is by way of the union. No one else need apply. The open shop, on the other hand, does not recognise any union. It is open to all labour without distinction. It does not require the union label. All men are welcome to come and earn their living in the sweat of their brow. The union does not help them to get a job, nor does it keep them from getting it. They must stand or fall upon their own merit.

And so men get together and organise truth into creeds and confessions of faith, into schools and systems of thought; and set the seal of temple or synagogue upon it, and then close their minds against all else. No other truth need apply. The only access to their minds is by way of the creeds. They know not the voice of strangers.

Truth must get itself labeled before they will consider it. The open mind makes no such demands. It is open to truth, from whatever source it may come, in whatever guise it may come. It does not ask for credentials. All truth is welcome to come and earn its living in the sweat of its brow. It does not need to get itself stamped. Labels do not help, and they do not hinder. It is only its truth that recommends it.

There is more excuse for organised labour, Elisha, than there is for organised truth. Labour may have to get together in order to hold its own against organised capital. Its very life may depend upon it. It may abuse its power or its privilege after it gets together, but that is an abuse and not a legitimate use. But truth does not need to be organised in order to hold its own against other truth, or even against error. Its life does not depend upon it. It has nothing to fear from other truth. Truths do not contradict each other. It has nothing to fear from error in an open field. Men can do nothing against the truth. All weapons forged against it fail in the end. They always have, and they always will. It wins its way by the sheer force of its existence. All it needs is a fair hearing. Even capital and labour are beginning to realise that their interests are one. They should not conflict, and will not when each is properly understood. Much more do truths have all things in common. God's house is not divided against itself. They are members, one of another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it in the end.

There are many obstacles to the reception of truth, Elisha. Their name is legion, and they lie in wait for us at every turn. There is pride, and there is prejudice, and there is preconceived opinion, and there is intrenched

interest. All these close the mind against the truth, each in its own way; and the prophet, by the very nature of his calling, is peculiarly susceptible to them.

Pride keeps us from looking up. It is more conscious of the things which are beneath it than it is of those which are above it. That is the reason it goes before a fall. It looks down, and looking down makes men dizzy. The climbing man must keep his eye on the top of the ladder. God is up, and we must look up to see Him. Looking up keeps us humble, because it makes us realise the distance we have to travel. Walking with God, unlike ordinary walking, is not "a continual process of falling." It is a continual process of rising. It is an uphill business. Thereby hangs the difficulty of it. It goes against the law of spiritual gravitation. Pride puffs up, but it does not build up. It swells the head, but it does not fill it or train it in correct thinking.

There are various kinds of pride, and each produces after its kind. Pride of blood makes aristocrats. Pride of intellect makes pedants. And pride of character makes Pharisees. A man may have all these, and enjoy them with impunity, so long as he is not too conscious of them. A woman may have beauty without vanity. It is only when she becomes aware of it, and makes others aware of it, that she becomes vain. She knows it too well. It is that which spoils beauty in women, and strength in men, and wisdom in prophets. Proud men are conscious of their knowledge; but a man must be conscious of his ignorance in order to learn, and he must not be ashamed of it. That is the reason we learn more in the first ten years of our life than in all the rest of it put together. We are not afraid to expose our ignorance by asking questions. Like Adam and Eve in Eden, we are naked and unashamed.

Proud men expose their knowledge, and humble men their ignorance. God resisteth the one, and draweth nigh unto the other. It is as hard for a proud man to enter the kingdom of learning as it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The way into both is strait and narrow. All extra baggage must be left behind. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and fear stands in awe of God. It does not behave itself unseemly. Whatever others may do, Elisha, as for the prophet and his house, he must keep his soul humble. He must put on no airs either with God or man.

Prejudice keeps a man from seeing straight. It warps his mind, and puts his thoughts on the bias. He cannot look the truth in the eye. He sees it out of proportion, and at the wrong angle. Straight thinking is absolutely essential to an appreciation of the truth. Only the unbiased mind can give the truth a fair hearing. If a man is prejudiced against any point of the compass, he is practically blind on that side. Nothing can reach him from that direction. Nathanael was blind in one eye, and his Lord came very near getting by him on that side. "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write," Philip told him, "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" replied Nathanael with a curl of the lip. As well might one expect to find a salmon in the Dead Sea. He may have been an Israelite in whom there was no guile, but he was not an Israelite in whom there was no prejudice. His mind was closed against Nazareth. If he had not been honest enough to go and see, he would never have known the supreme truth that has come out of Nazareth.

Preconceived opinion keeps us from looking forward

It is more interested in what it has learned than it is in what it may learn. It matters not whether we have formed our opinions or have inherited them from those who have gone before us, we should not suffer them to handicap us in the pursuit of further knowledge. Previous knowledge should not be a stumbling-block but a stepping-stone. Too many of us cease to form new opinions after a certain age, and spend the balance of our time in defence of those we have already formed. We cease to be pupils, and become partisans. We do not give the Bible a fair chance at us. We look upon it as a sort of storehouse of proof-texts. We do not go to it that we may believe, but that we may prove what we already believe. That is getting the cart before the horse, Elisha. Investigation should go before the formation of an opinion, not after it.

We should have our convictions, and the courage of them, but we should also be open to further conviction. It is the open mind that has made the great discoveries and gone upon the great adventures. It asks the most intimate questions of nature, and waits patiently for an answer. And when the answer comes, it accepts it, at whatever cost to previous opinions. It has no axes to grind, nor any pet theories to prove. It holds no brief for any particular system of belief or school of thought. The truth makes free only when we stand fast in the liberty wherewith it makes us free. Otherwise it becomes a taskmaster and teacher of dead languages. We learn at the peril of our freedom of thought. We must maintain our independence at all hazards, and declare it to all comers. Our very life depends upon it. It is easy to run away from the world, and escape from real life. Any fool can do that. But it is hard to stay in the world and

keep ourselves unspotted from it, to live and keep ourselves unspoiled by life. We may learn at the expense of things that learning will not bring, as we may get rich at the expense of things that money will not buy. That is paying too dearly for our knowledge. To take on culture without losing our naturalness, to take on knowledge without losing our inquisitiveness, to take on experience without losing our innocence; that is the hard art of living in this world, Elisha, and happy is the man who becomes master of it.

Intrenched interest keeps us from looking out. It genders the ingrowing mind. It turns inward upon itself as the sparks fly upward. It causes us to look upon our own things to the neglect of the things of others. Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also; and where his interests are, there will his thoughts turn inevitably. The interested man comes to consider all questions in the light of his own interests and from the angle of his own eye. He cannot give the truth a fair hearing. His judgment is deflected by his own interests. The Pharisees were a standing example of that. They were the self-constituted keepers of the house of Israel. Not a dove could call to its mate, or a prophet lift up his voice in the wilderness, without their permission. And so when Jesus took it upon himself to cleanse the temple courts of those who were making merchandise of God's house, and dishonest merchandise at that, they were down upon him at once with the question, "By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?" He certainly did not get it from them, and in their judgment there was no other source. He answered their question by asking them one. "The baptism of John," said he, "was it from heaven, or from men?" It was an honest

question, to be answered honestly. But they were not honest men. They immediately began to reason within themselves, and they reasoned after their kind and according to their own lights. And see how their minds worked. "If we shall say, From heaven," said they to themselves, "he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, From men; there are the people, who are persuaded that the Baptist is a prophet." They were between the devil and the deep sea, and there was no way out but to back out, which they proceeded to do with the best grace possible. It seems never to have occurred to them to consider the question upon its merits, but only in its bearing upon their own interests. It mattered not to them whether John was a prophet or a pretender. They were intent only upon saving their faces and maintaining their standing with the people. No wonder the Master left them and went his way. He never cast his pearls before swine, or knocked vainly at closed doors. They were hopelessly prejudiced by their own interests.

What do we mean by intrenched interest, Elisha, and why is it so necessary that the prophet should be on his guard against it? It means that a man's own personal interests get themselves intrenched in the established order, in the industrial order, the political order, the religious order, so that they stand or fall together. They become so identified with each other that it is wellnigh impossible to distinguish between them. And the prophet of all men is in deadly danger of that. He makes a business of his Master's business. Not only his life, but his living depends upon it. Thereby hangs the danger. His own interests are so intimately bound up with the interests of the kingdom that he easily mistakes the one for

the other, and thinks he is doing God service when he is only serving his own selfish interests. He must watch his soul with exceeding care. Self-interest slips upon him with the footfall of a cat. It is the pestilence that walketh in darkness, the destruction that wasteth a noonday. Samson wist not that the spirit of the Lord had departed from him until it was gone. It is here that the very elect are so often deceived. Beware, Elisha, for God's sake and your own soul's sake. It is here that so many prophets have lost their souls, and so many martyrs their lives. Most all wholesome reforms have run upon the rock of intrenched interest, and many noble reformers have met death there. It was that which sent Jesus to the cross, and Huss to the stake. It was that which lighted the fires of Smithfield, and forged the thumbscrews of the Inquisition.

And those who go to their death fare better in the end than those who send them. It is better to be killed than to kill, to suffer persecution than to persecute. That is why Jesus prayed on the cross, not for Himself, but for those who were putting Him there. They were shutting their eyes to the very light of the world, and His eyes to the light of the sun; and the pity of it, for Him and for them, was that they knew not what they did. A man may lose his life in this world, and keep it unto life eternal; but what shall it profit a man, here or hereafter, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul when God shall require it of him?

So much for the closed mind, Elisha, and the things which close it. It is well to know them that we may be on our guard against them. Let us turn now to the open mind, to some instances of it, and the absolute necessity

of it to the prophet, if he would save his own soul alive and properly shepherd the souls of others.

It was an open mind which Gamaliel brought to the meeting of the Seventy that day, when three simple Galilean fishermen were brought before them for trial. They were innocent-looking men upon the face of them, unlearned and ignorant in the schools and without power or prestige on their side, and yet they were turning Jerusalem upside down with their new doctrine. The council was greatly alarmed for the established order, and was about to lay violent hands upon them, as it had upon their Master before them, when Gamaliel, had in repute of them all for the clarity of his vision and the charity of his judgment, rose in their midst and said, "Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves; who was slain, and all, as many as put their faith in him, were scattered and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, as many as followed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found fighting against God." There was a difference of opinion. Some believed that the new movement was of God, others that it was of the devil. Time only would tell. If it was of men, it would go the way of all the rest. Gamaliel would wait and see.

It was an open mind that William James took with him out into the unseen, about which there is so much specu-

lation and so little known. Shortly before his death, he remarked to a friend, "If it is possible to talk back when I get there, I will do it." The schools were divided, and doctors were disagreed. Some claimed to have received communications from the next world, while others shook their heads and said it was impossible. There was no medium of communication between. Some even went so far as to declare that there was no other world there. James would know soon, and if it were possible, he would let others know. He had kept open house here, and he would continue to do so hereafter. It is to such minds that nature tells her secrets, and God reveals his heavenly visions.

There are two kinds of people in the world, Elisha, in their attitude toward the truth, and between them the truth is hard-pressed for its life. There are those on the one hand who will have none of the truth when it is old, and on the other those who will have none of it when it is new. The one is afraid of the past, the other of the future. Go not to either extreme, Elisha. The past has claims upon us, only we should remember that it is behind us; and the future has claims upon us, only we should remember that it is before us. The best way to deal with two extremes is to split the difference between them. The safest path is generally to be found in the middle of the road. Hold fast to old truths, which have been tried and found true, and at the same time be ready to try new ones, to see if they are true. We have to turn our backs upon the past in order to face the future, but we do not have to depart from it. We should keep to the old trails, but go forward in them. The place to break new ground is not at the side of them, but at the end of them. The

truth is true neither because it is old nor because it is new, but only because it is true.

But it is the new truth that needs a friend. It is a stranger, and it must be taken in. Old truths have become domiciled in our thoughts, and are at home among us. We take them as a matter of course. They are a part of the furniture of our life. They have established themselves in our faith and affections. They have been housed in institutions, and enacted into laws. But the new truth is without, waiting at our gates, knocking at our doors, disturbing our slumbers. We are in our comfortable beds, and we do not like to get up. It calls upon us to readjust our thinking, possibly to reconstruct our living, and we do not like to do that. It goes against the grain. We do not take kindly to change after a certain age. Old ways are so comfortable, like old sandals and old shoes. We get set in them, as our shoes get set to our feet, and we are reluctant to change. New shoes hurt our feet, and new thoughts hurt our minds, until we get used to them. "No man, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better." That is why new truth always meets with opposition. It disturbs the established order, and so the established order is against it; it runs counter to our habits, and habit is strong upon us; it transgresses the traditions of the elders, and so the elders are opposed to it. It always has to wait for some men to die off, and get out of the way.

The average man of us is shy of strangers, whether they be strange truths or strange men. And yet somebody must entertain the stranger. If new truth is to get into the world, somebody must let it in. It cannot enter through closed doors, and it will not come in at the window. The shepherd enters only by way of the door. He

that climbeth up any other way is a thief and a robber. Falsehood enters the world by fair means or foul, by the back door if not by the front door; but not so the truth. It demands a fair hearing and an honest entrance. It does not come as a thief, but as a guest. We must come by it honestly, or not at all. The kingdom of heaven does not take us by violence. Only earthly kingdoms do that, and His kingdom was not of this world. God will not raise so much as a finger to force an entrance. He knocks, even with nail-pierced hands, but He waits for the door to be opened.

We ought to be hospitable to strangers, Elisha. God was a stranger here once, a babe in a manger; and so were we all. We are in the world because some pale-faced woman was willing to go down to the gates of death to bring us in, and because God was willing to go to the cross to keep us in. Let us do as we have been done by. "When you come into your Promised Land," said Moses to the children of Israel, "and meet a stranger there, remember that you were strangers once in Egypt." We too often forget that, Elisha, when we have come into our Promised Land. We put on airs with strangers, as if we had always been here. God only can afford to do that, and yet He does it least of all. All the good old truths whose faces are so familiar to us were new once; and somebody had to entertain them, and defend them, and even die for them at a pinch.

Let us not mistake our duty to strangers, Elisha. So many people do. They seem to think that entertainment means adoption. They feel called upon either to receive the stranger immediately into the bosom of their family or else reject him altogether. But that does not necessarily follow. When you receive a stranger into your

home, you do not thereby make him a member of your family, or count him among your friends. You do not at once take him into your confidence, or tell him your secrets; not if you are wise. You simply entertain him. That is all. You take him in out of the weather; you let him sit at your fire, and eat of your bread, and sleep under your roof. You extend to him the hospitality of your house. He is your guest, not your friend; not even your acquaintance as yet. First entertainment, then acquaintance, and after that the full confidence of friendship. That is the proper order, whether with new men or new truths. Our first duty to any new truth that knocks at our door is simply entertainment. It does not require of us that we adopt it into our beliefs, or build it into our lives, until it has been tried and found true. It demands only an open door and a hospitable mind, only an honest hearing and a fair chance to justify itself at the bar of our judgment. What more could it ask, what less?

Keep open house, Elisha, and keep it open to all quarters. You can never tell from what direction the truth will come. God is not committed to any one quarter. The four winds are his, and the four corners of the earth. He speaks to us from within and from without. Our house stands at the conjunction of two worlds, where flesh and spirit meet, and there are windows on both sides. They command the world of men, and the unseen world of God, whose voice is still and small. Our life is strangely blown upon from both sides, and the wind bloweth where it will; from this side to-day, from that to-morrow. Man your windows, Elisha, with unceasing vigil.

It is incumbent upon the prophet of all men to keep

open house. His calling demands it of him. He must see not only for himself, but also for others. He is a sky pilot. The man in the street looks to him for guidance, and the man at the plough. Walls shut them in, but not the man on the walls. His is the commanding position. Men down below are constantly calling to him, Watchman, what of the sky; is it red and lowering, or radiant with promise? And he must be able to tell them, or else get down off the walls and cease blocking the skyline with his dark body. He must either see for others or let them see for themselves as best they can. The chief charge which Jesus brought against those who sat in Moses' seat was that they had shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; they neither went in themselves, nor would they suffer those who would have entered to enter. They were actually in the way. The horizon of Israel would have been clearer without them. They were fencing up the kingdom instead of opening it up.

Our Master also demands it of us, Elisha, that we keep open house. We cannot follow Him and be close-minded, any more than we can be close-fisted. He was the most open-minded man who ever lived, and the most open-handed. His mind was an open court, where all the thoughts of men had a fair hearing, where all the children of men stood upon an equal footing. Let this mind be in you which was also in Him. Be swift your soul to answer him, be jubilant your feet. You cannot afford to close your windows even at night. Heavenly visions have been known to come to men in their dreams.

If there is ever a man whom it behooves to keep open house it is the prophet, and if ever there was a time when it behooved him to keep it open it is now, when old things are passing away and all things are becoming new.

The old order changeth before our very eyes. The fountains of the great deep are broken up, and the spirit of God is abroad on the face of the waters. The world is fluid under our hands. A new heaven and a new earth are in the making all about us. Everywhere the tree of life is putting forth new leaves. Let us not mistake the meaning of all this toil and travail of our times. It is not death pangs we are feeling, but birth-throes. A new age is being born in our day, and birth always means travail. These are not easy times, Elisha, in which we are living. They are hard times, and they press hardly upon the bodies and souls of men. Men live their lives and do their work under great difficulty. But they are intensely interesting times; none more so since those halcyon days when Jesus was here among men. It is well worth living, if only to see what will happen to-morrow. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that more truths have come to light in the last hundred years than in all the centuries before, and each one is more surprising than the last. Miracles have not ceased: they have only become so common that we take them as a matter of course. They are no longer miraculous. They are all in the day's work. Jules Verne has not been long in his grave, but he is already a back number. All his wild, outlandish dreams have been more than realised.

And what has been true of my generation, Elisha, will be true in a larger measure of yours. You will live to see things that it has not entered into my heart to conceive. Don't be afraid that the wonders will all be gone before you get to them. The book of revelation is not closed. The last word of life has not been spoken, or if it has it has not been fully understood. There is more to follow. Slowly men are spelling out secrets which have been hid-

den from the foundation of the world, hidden because men's eyes were holden to them. Many splendid visions have been let down out of heaven, but the windows are still open. Who can tell what a day may bring forth? It doth not yet appear what the next revelation will be. We only know that from all the hilltops of the world the faces of men are turned forward with high expectation and hope. The times are radiant with anticipation. There must be something there, around the next turn in the road, over the crest of the distant hill, to draw the eyes of men forward with such compelling power. Some new window of heaven is about to be opened, or a new leaf turned in the book of life. Something is waiting there for our travelling feet. Perhaps it is the Master Himself, come again in some one of His many guises, on some one of His many missions upon earth. Who knows? Keep your eyes open, Elisha, and your loins girded about, ready to run for your Lord when He speaks the word.

CHAPTER IX

AN UNDERSTANDING HEART

When Solomon came into his kingdom, in the stead of his father, the Lord asked him what He could do for him. And what do you think he asked for, Elisha? Not for riches, or honour, or the life of his enemies; but for an understanding heart to judge between right and wrong, to discern between good and evil. An understanding heart may bring riches and honour and triumph over our enemies, but riches and honour and success do not always bring an understanding heart. Solomon was already wise enough to know that. He felt unequal to his task. He had a king's job on his hands, and he was young and inexperienced. He found himself confronted with the hard affairs of state, and with even more difficult domestic affairs. He had to live with a thousand wives, and keep on good terms with them and, what is more, keep them on good terms with each other. He had inherited his father's job, but he had not inherited David's understanding heart. That is something which no man can leave to another. Each of us must get it for himself, either directly from the Lord, or by indirection from observation and experience. Happy is the man who has it to end with, as the result of years of living and learning from life; but happier is the man who has it to begin with, as the result of watchful days and wakeful nights in the secret place.

And if the king has need of it, much more the prophet. Prophecy is more difficult than kingcraft, Elisha, and calls for a quicker understanding. The affairs of a kingdom of this world are so much more tangible than those of a kingdom which is not of this world, and are therefore more easily conducted. The unseen world is so remote from the everyday affairs of life, and men adventure there with such extreme reluctance. There is so much more at issue in the prophet's work, and mistakes are more hardly mended. The king can overtake a misdirected messenger before he reaches his destination, but who can recall a misspoken word after it has left the lips of the speaker? It has gone upon its mission, and it will not return at his call. It is no longer his to command. It has lodged in the hearts of others, and he cannot pluck it out against their will. The prophet is God's spokesman, and if he speak falsely for God, who is to gainsay him? Only some other human voice likewise speaking for God. It is one human voice against another, and who is to judge between them? When prophets disagree, the people go astray.

The thunders of God have been directed against false prophets from the beginning. "Woe to them who call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Shame to the prophet who gives men stones for bread, and serpents when they ask for fish; who causes them to believe a lie, when they come to him for the truth. The curse of God is on him, and his day is coming. It is only a question of time.

And the result is the same, whether the prophet mislead men knowingly or ignorantly, whether he deceive only others or himself with them. Not the same guilt

to the prophet, but the same hurt to the people. If you give a man poison, Elisha, and it kills him, he will be just as dead, and will stay dead just as long, whether you knew it was poison or not. If you put a man on the wrong road, he will miss his way just as surely and will go just as far astray, whether you misdirected him with the best of intentions or the worst of intentions. Those who sent Jesus to His death thought they were doing God service, but that did not bring the Master back from the dead, or restore His kingdom to Israel. He came back, but it was not because the rulers of Israel saw their mistake. The majority of them never saw it, and it would have been all the same if they had. No greater calamity can befall a man than that atrophy of the spiritual senses which overtook the Pharisees. What is to become of a prophet, and what is to become of his people, when he mistakes the voice of God for the very hiss of the serpent? He has forgotten the sound of his Father's voice, and there is no way to reach him with word from home.

God is not mocked, Elisha, and His laws are not evaded. Whatsoever a prophet soweth in his own life, that shall he also reap, whether he knows what he is sowing or not; and whatsoever he soweth in the lives of others, that shall they also reap, whether he knows what he is sowing or not. It is the soil, and not the sower, that bears the grain; and every seed brings forth after its kind. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Seedtime and harvest follow each other, as day follows night, and wheat and tares grow together unto the harvest. Ponder well the words of your mouth before you speak them, Elisha. Men will go on believing them long after you are dead and gone.

But how shall a man know that he knows the truth?

By what ear-marks shall he recognise it? Others before him have thought that they knew it, but time proved that they did not. How shall he assure himself that he too is not mistaken? He thinks so, but thinking does not necessarily make it so. It did not make the earth flat, or cause the sun to revolve around it. Belief does not make a thing true, nor does unbelief keep it from being true. How shall a man know that he has discovered the truth, or that it has been revealed to him? There is no sign to tell him. No bell rings or trumpet sounds. The truth is its own witness, and its voice is still and small. The Jews asked a sign of Jesus, but he would give them none, because there was none to give. If their own hearts did not assure them, nothing else could. The truth reveals itself only to the understanding heart.

It is well to have an open mind, Elisha, but an understanding heart should always go with it. The one without the other is a dangerous possession. We may receive any passerby under our roof, but we must choose our friends and intimate acquaintances with exceeding care. If we are to keep open house to all comers, we must be able to judge between them; otherwise, we are liable to entertain wolves in sheep's clothing as well as angels in disguise. Both are going to and fro in the earth, and travelling up and down in it. The devil does not always appear with hoof and horns. He is sometimes transformed into an angel of light.

If the lights and shadows of life stood out in bold relief before our eyes, if good and evil met each other, as the hills meet the sky, in clearcut lines, the prophet's task would be comparatively easy; but they do not. They appear in all sorts of variations and combinations. Hence the difficulty of the prophetic office. You will find the

world a strange mixture, Elisha, of good and evil, truth and error, laughter and tears; and the different ingredients do not appear in sharp contrast. They blend, and run into each other. There is white and black; but there is also gray, and all the other shades between. Men are neither good nor bad, they are both good and bad. So many things are neither bitter nor sweet, they are bitter-sweet. Twilight is neither day nor night, it is day and night. Spring is neither winter nor summer, it is winter and summer. It is at these meeting-points that trouble begins, and doubts arise. Day does not leave off abruptly, and night begin; they shade off into each other. And so with winter and summer, and flesh and spirit. And yet we know that winter does change to summer, and day to night. At two given points, far enough removed from each other, the distinction is clear. It is quite apparent in midsummer and midwinter, at midday and midnight. In January we know it is winter, and in July we know it is summer; but just where did one leave off, and the other begin? We cannot put our finger on the place. Just when does a boy become a man, or a tribe a nation? The man himself cannot tell, nor the nation. And yet the man knows he was a boy once, and that he is a man now. Transitions are such subtle things, and so hardly distinguished.

Life has its two opposite poles, far removed from each other, where things are as different as day and night; but it also has its equator, midway between, where things are as indifferent as dusk. There is no doubt at either pole. When you see a man bestow his goods to feed the poor, you know it is right; and when you see him take his neighbour's goods, either by stealth or by force, you know it is wrong. When you see one man take another's life,

you know he does ill; and when you see him save another's life, you know he does well. Your conscience bears unmistakable evidence. But there are intermediate points where its witness is not so clear. It is upon the equator, in that uncertain twilight zone of life, that men have so much difficulty between right and wrong; and it is there that they so often come to the prophet for counsel. It is a far cry from one pole to the other, but life runs continuously all the way between them, and there are no landmarks on the way. Start out upon any line of human conduct, whether it lead through amusements or politics or business, and, sooner or later, you will find yourself at a point where right is leaving off and wrong is beginning; and the change is like that from day to night, from winter to summer. Right shades off into wrong, and truth into error.

Nature draws no hard and fast lines, Elisha. She leaves that to men. God makes the world, but men make geography. He stretches out the heavens, but men make maps of them. He rounds out the year, but men draw lines across it, dividing winter from summer. He gives life, but men divide it into childhood and youth and old age. And it is this map-making, this drawing of lines where nature has not drawn them, that is so difficult. It calls for a clear eye, and a steady hand.

And yet, for all practical purposes, lines must be drawn and distinctions made. They are arbitrary lines, and therefore only approximations at best; but they are nevertheless necessary. Men must have maps to go by, and rules to live by. The equator is a purely imaginary line, Elisha, but it serves a useful purpose. Navigation would be next to impossible without it. Continents must be divided into countries and states and principalities, if men

are to dwell upon the earth and set bounds to their habitations. The year must be divided into months and weeks and days, and the day into hours and minutes, if men are to make dates and meet engagements. Right and wrong must be defined, even to their nicer distinctions, if men are to recognise rights and respect them, if they are to know their duty and do it. We instinctively feel that there are moral distinctions, even where they do not appear to the naked eye. Our conscience feels the pull of the two opposite poles, even when it hangs in a balance between them. Our life is shot through with right and wrong in all their manifold distinctions; and to ferret them out, and make them clear to the eyes of men, is the prophet's business.

And you have come into your kingdom, Elisha, at a time when this business is peculiarly difficult. The old simple days, with their few homely duties, are gone for ever, and the times are complex, and out of joint at many points. Never has the raw material of life been so rich and varied, and yet never has the art of living been so extremely difficult. The ends of the earth, and of the ages, are come upon us, and they have come in the utmost confusion. Old landmarks are gone, and new ones have not yet been defined. The four winds bring us raw products from the four corners of the earth, but they do not winnow the chaff from the wheat. We must do our own winnowing. He that would know the truth of God for this generation must have all his wits about him, and keep them in close touch with the infinite. He must bring to his task a mind without prejudice, and a heart without guile. If a man is to read the handwriting on the walls of king's palaces and cotter's cottages, he must know God's handwriting when he sees it, and expert knowledge

comes only from long familiarity. If he is to recognise the still small voice in all this modern babble of tongues, he must have a quick ear and an understanding heart. If he is to see God face to face in the throng, as Moses saw Him in the solitude, he must keep his eyes clear and his windows clean. We see God with our hearts, Elisha; and the purer the heart, the clearer the vision. He is not arrived at by processes of logic, He is seen by direct vision. Who by searching can find out God? He does not tell us to dig and delve and weigh evidence, that we may know that He is God, but "be still and know." Not activity, but passivity of spirit. To see accurately we must stand still. If either the beholder or the object of his vision is in motion, the vision will be blurred or out of focus. All other things being equal, water is clearest when it is still.

There are various kinds of knowledge, Elisha, and various ways of coming by them. We obtain historical knowledge from the reading of books. We arrive at scientific knowledge by investigation and the weighing of evidence. We get a knowledge of men from observation of them and their ways. But we come by knowledge of God through the intuitions of our souls in direct contact with the unseen. There are truths which are necessarily objective. They cannot be subjected to the test of experience. There is no point of contact. They must be accepted upon outside evidence. But there are other truths which lend themselves to subjective processes. They can be tried out in our own experience. God can be known directly. He challenges subjection. He invites personal contact. We can try Him, and see for ourselves. There is a difference between knowledge and information, Elisha. Information is knowledge about things. You

will find a vast amount of information about God, but not so much knowledge of Him. Others may be content to know about Him, but the prophet must know Him—the fashion of His countenance, the sound of His voice, the feel of His hand. He dare not take his knowledge second-hand.

You can get information upon many subjects from many sources, Elisha; but you can get a knowledge of God in only one way, and from only one source. If you do not get it in that way, you will not get it at all; if you do not seek it from that source, you will seek it in vain from all other sources. Why is it that men return from the woods and open fields with such conflicting reports of what they saw there? One man comes back and reports that he saw God there in every blade of grass, in every burning bush, in every flaming sky. And another tells us that it is all a mistake; he has been there, and he saw nothing but stocks and stones and star dust. What is the difference, and where does it lie? It is not in the outer world upon which they look, but in the men who look. They look upon the same things, but with different eyes. One took God with him to the woods, and the other did not. That is all. "I used to think," says the old Professor in David Grayson's delightful *Adventures in Contentment,* "I used to think, when I was a young man, that there was no God; but now," with a wave of his hand which took in the whole world, "it seems to me there is nothing but God." Why such a difference between the young man and the old man? The world had not changed at all. Somewhere between youth and old age he had come upon God in his own heart, and it changed the whole face of nature for him. God is everywhere in His world, Elisha, from the beginning of things

to the end of things, from the top of things to the bottom of things, from the outmost edge of things to the inmost core of things; the trail of His garments is upon all our highways and byways; but there is only one point of direct contact with Him, only one place where we meet Him face to face, and that is in these human hearts of ours. If we do not find Him there, we will not find Him anywhere; and if we find Him there, we will find Him everywhere, in autumn woods and evening skies, in human faces and desert places, and the whole earth will be full of His glory.

If you are to speak to men with authority, Elisha, upon the many hard problems of our modern life, you must come to them with this open vision of God. It will not do to quote books, or cite passages. Of the making of books there is no end, and much study is a weariness to the flesh. What they want is a living voice from the living God. You must be able to look them in the face, and say, "This is God's truth, you can stake your soul's salvation upon it; I have seen Him, and this is what He said to me." Don't mistake the temper of this age, Elisha. It has been called all sorts of hard names; but it is a pretty good age, after all, perhaps the best the world has ever seen. It is not frivolous, though it believes in making the most of this present world. It is not indifferent, though it is not concerned about some of the things which concerned its fathers. It is not antagonistic, except when it is rubbed the wrong way. It is simply and frankly agnostic. It is ignorant of the unseen. It does not know. It would like to know. There are times when it would give its right hand to know. It longs for the feel of solid rock under its feet, as it was under the feet of its fathers, but it cannot find it

where its fathers found it. Times have changed, and the thoughts of men have changed with them. The modern mind has scant respect for forms and formulas, for dogmas and decrees of councils; but it has a profound respect for facts, and it knows them when it sees them. And there is no fact it is so seriously concerned about, whatever it may say to the contrary, as the stupendous fact of God and our duty to Him. Convince it of that fact, and you take its feet out of the miry clay and set them upon a rock and establish its goings; shake its faith in that fact, and you take away the very foundation of its soul and leave it, like Atlas, with the world on its back and nothing to stand on. That is the fundamental fact which gives significance to all other facts. If there is no God, from whom are all things and to whom are all things, if there is no heart at the heart of things and no hand at the helm of things, then nothing else matters very much. Whether we feast and be merry, or fast and be sad, it amounts to the same thing in the end, because it amounts to nothing. We build our little house of cards, and the wind blows it away, or we die and leave it, and that is the end of it.

Modern science is at its wits' end, Elisha. All roads have led it to Rome, but none of its keys will unlock the gates of the Eternal City. It has arrived by investigation and experiment upon the borders of the unseen world, only to find that its chosen processes of thought cannot get it any further. They are out of place there. It surmises that there is more to the universe than it has discovered or dreamed of in its philosophy, but it does not yet appear what it is. Astronomers were practically convinced that the planet Neptune was there long before it was actually discovered. It had

to be there to account for the behaviour of the other planets. And so science is pretty well convinced that God is there. He has to be there to account for the behaviour of other things. But it has not yet discovered Him, and it will not on the road which it has been travelling. He is not to be come at in that way. It is squarely up against the unseen world with no clue to its discovery. Greek thought was in very much the same fix when Jesus came. It had travelled the same road, and was held up at the same point, where the human mind always stops at the end of its tether; and, when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased Him by the foolishness of a manger to show it another way. He is not arrived at upon the steps of a syllogism, but upon the beams of a Cross. We may take Him for granted, but that is not enough. God, in some manner and under some name, has become the working hypothesis of modern thought, but a working hypothesis is not sufficient for purposes of life. The world wants something more than that, because life is more than thought. It is feeling after God, if haply it may find Him, but it is looking in the wrong place and in the wrong way. It must somehow take a new tack, and pursue a different course, but it does not know how. All its training has been in another direction. If you can get it out of its blind alley, Elisha, and set its feet upon the right road, you will have done it an inestimable service. But you must have found Him yourself first, to the assurance of your own soul, and He must be a living fact in your own heart. A man can testify only to that which he has seen and heard. All other evidence is ruled out of court.

Many things will bid for your time and attention, Elisha. The wisdom of this world will cry to you from

the street corners, and the crossing of the paths. She hath builded her house, and hewn out her seven pillars; she hath set her table in order, and sent out her maidens. She will waylay you with her messengers. But be not deceived. The root of the matter is not there. Get wisdom, Elisha, all that you can honestly, and culture, and information upon all available subjects; but, with all your getting, get understanding, that you may discern between the temporal and the eternal, between that which is of God and that which is not. Else you may build your house upon the sand, and cause others to build upon it.

CHAPTER X

THE WILL TO RECEIVE

PROVE all things, Elisha, that are presented to you for proof and are capable of proof, either by trial of evidence or the trial of your own experience, and then hold fast that which is true. Not before it has been proved, but after.

There are two ways of taking strange things, whether they be strange doctrines or strange men, and you will find people of both ways. There are those who shut their eyes and open their mouths, and blindly swallow the whole thing, and there are those who open their eyes and shut their mouths, and flatly refuse the whole thing. The first swallow a great deal of error along with the truth. The second refuse a great deal of truth along with the error. Both are right, and both are wrong, Elisha; half right, and half wrong. Most all grain needs winnowing. Few things are ready for food in their natural state. Keep your mouth open to new truth, but look at it before you swallow it. Winnow it well with your eyes. That is what they are put over your mouth for, to see what goes into it; otherwise, they might as well be in the back of your head.

Folks are so queer, Elisha. They are so much alike in some ways, and so different in others. That is the reason it is so hard to classify them. There are some people who take pleasure in believing things; and the harder the

things, the more they delight in them. They believe that the whale swallowed Jonah, that the sun stood still for Joshua, and that the Red Sea parted to let the Israelites through and closed over the Egyptians. They believe all the hard things, and are only sorry that there are not harder things to believe. They would just as soon believe that Jonah swallowed the whale, if the story read that way. They thank the Lord that they are not as other men, who will not believe what they cannot understand. And then there are others who take pleasure in doubting things. Jesus may have turned water to wine, but they doubt it. He may have walked on the sea, but they don't see how he could. He may have risen from the dead, but they were not there. They shake their heads over all the strange tales, and wonder why it is that men are called upon to believe such hard things. They thank the Lord that they are not as other men, who believe just anything that is told them. They would not believe the Jonah story, if they saw it with their eyes. And so they go about playing the Pharisee, the one with their beliefs, the other with their doubts, as if there were any particular virtue in either of them. Belief is good when it rests upon sure foundations, and doubt is good when it leads to honest investigation; but there is no reason why a man should boast of either, or flaunt it in the face of God or man.

Don't be afraid to doubt, Elisha, where there is room for doubt; and don't be afraid to believe, where there is ground for belief. But make no boast of either. Fear only to believe a lie, and seek only to know the truth. And when you are convinced of the truth, accept it at all hazards. Don't dally with it. Don't halt or hesitate. Don't wait to see whether others receive it or reject it. Don't ask whether it is popular or unpopular, whether it

will bring you gain or loss. Receive it into a good and honest heart, let it lead where it will. It may not be pleasant, it may not be profitable. It may run counter to what you have hitherto believed, it may endanger the established order upon which you live. No matter. At whatever cost to previous opinion, at whatever sacrifice of place or position, let the stranger in. The heavenly vision does not always lead along the line of least resistance. It did not lead Paul that way. He was going in that direction when it met him, and it faced him about and headed him the other way. It led him to prison and persecution, to danger and death. It made enemies out of his former friends, and turned against him the very fires of persecution which he had helped to kindle. There is no telling to what lengths it may lead you, Elisha, or to what sacrifices; but you can be assured of one thing. It will not lead you astray.

Be cautious, Elisha, but not to the point of cowardice. Caution becometh a prophet, but it easily runs to excess. It may keep us from going too fast, or it may cause us to go too slow. It is well to have brakes on your wagon, especially when it is hitched to a star; but you should know when to use them. They are not meant to be used when you are going up hill, and progress is an uphill business. Caution is in order so long as the truth is in doubt; but it is out of order the moment doubt disappears, and the truth is clear. Conservatism is a splendid safeguard when it is directed against error, but it becomes an instrument of evil when it is turned against the truth. It saved England from the vagaries of Puritanism, and Europe from the follies of the French Revolution; but it also established the Spanish Inquisition, and proclaimed St. Bartholomew's day, and lighted the fires of Smith-

field. Beware of it, Elisha. It easily becomes a habit of mind. Walls are good for protection against enemies, but they should have gates in them, and watch-towers on them; watch-towers from which God's coming messengers may be seen, and gates to admit them when they arrive. The prophet is a keeper of souls. He should let in nothing that is false. He should keep out nothing that is true.

There are those, and prophets among them, I fear, Elisha, who receive new truth reluctantly, as though they begrudged the world its progress. They behold the widening horizon with alarm, and tremble for the ark of God every time a new hand is laid upon it. They are content with the old world, and look for no new ones beyond the sea. Not so the Master. There was nothing that so delighted his eyes as to come upon a little bit of new territory in an unexpected quarter, to discover great capacity for character in a publican or great capacity for faith in a Roman centurion. It did his soul good to see simple fishermen taking hold of the things of the kingdom, when they were hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent. He looked forward with joy to the coming of multitudes from the east and west and north and south to sit down with Abraham and Isaac in the kingdom, though he was sorry to see the children of the kingdom shut out. He was always glad when in the far country he saw the heart of a prodigal turn again home. He was not offended by the approaches of publicans and sinners. He rejoiced to see the tree of life put forth new leaves. The Pharisees were likewise surprised to find faith in a Gentile, or signs of repentance in a publican, but it is to be feared that it was not a very pleasant surprise. There was little

joy in their hearts over the prodigal's returning, and scant welcome for him home.

It is a sad day when men find more joy in the evening than in the morning, when they take greater delight in the approach of winter than in the return of summer. Spring to the Master was the most delightful season of the year, because it was the time of returning birds, and swelling buds, and blossoming meadows. There is something radically wrong with the heart that does not leap up to receive new truth. It has lost the elasticity of youth. Never did the gates of Jerusalem open so gladly as when they let in the ark of God. The shout of it can be heard to this day. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in." That is the way our hearts should swing open to our God, Elisha. He does not feel that He is an intruder then.

Hospitality to new truth does not mean disloyalty to the old. We do not have to give up the old in order to receive the new. We have to forswear one country when we take the oath of allegiance to another, but not so with two truths. Their sovereignty is not exclusive, but inclusive. Some folks have queer notions of progress, Elisha. They seem to think that when the world advances at the front, it has to retrench in the rear, as if the kingdom of truth were just so big, and could not gain ground on one side without losing it on the other. That is not the way nations enlarge their boundaries. They do not acquire new territory at the sacrifice of old. Spain did not give up her possessions in the Old world when she took possession of the New. The present does not become the future at the expense of the past. We must turn our backs upon the past when we face the future,

but that does not mean that we disown it or blot it out. It only means that we have left it behind.

Some people are always trying to raise a quarrel between the new and the old. But there should be no enmity between them. They are not necessarily at variance, the one with the other. No two of God's truths ever conflict. New error may conflict with old truth, or new truth with old error; but never new truth with old truth. Truth does not conflict with truth, but only with error. God's world is not divided against itself. All his truths run parallel with each other. They may seem to run together in the distance, like the rails of a track, but they do not. It is only an illusion of our eyes. There is always daylight between them, even at the point of nearest approach. They do not contradict each other. We may not be able to reconcile them, but that does not mean that they cannot be reconciled. It may only mean that the truth is broader than the measure of our minds, and deeper than the reach of our plummets. Don't be alarmed, Elisha, when you find two truths which seem to contradict each other, or too hastily conclude that you must choose between them. Don't give up either, if they appear to be true. Hold fast to both, and wait for light. Time will reconcile them, or prove one or the other untrue.

After all, most new truth is only more of old truth, or old truth in a new light. So often men have thought that they had discovered a new truth, when in reality they had only seen the other side of an old truth. The New World was only the other half of the Old World. The truth has many sides, and they are not all seen at once. Here a little, there a little, we discover them. Each generation adds its little mite to God's great sum. The present is debtor to the past, and creditor to the future. Every great

discoverer has had his predecessors. Newton had his, and Copernicus his, and Columbus his. We know in part, and we prophesy in part. It is not given to any one man, or to any one generation, to see the truth entire. When the world finally sees it whole, it will be only after many generations have seen it in part. All the great discoveries have been gradual growths from seed thoughts, and not sudden revelations. If there has been a sudden burst of light, it was only because the world had worked painfully up to the point where the light could be seen. It was the heavenly vision at the end of a long journey. "First the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear." That is the way all the great truths have come, as the corn comes out of the earth, as the rivers come out of the sea. Growth is God's way of bringing things to pass.

And growth is by addition, Elisha, not by subtraction. The trees do not throw away last year's growth when they begin to put forth new leaves. They begin this year where they left off last year, and push their branches on toward heaven. At the end of each season, their limbs are a little longer, and their roots a little deeper in the earth. Nature never throws away a particle of dust, nor gives up an inch of ground she has gained. She never creates new material where she can make use of old. She made the human ear out of an old gill-slit, and possibly many other human things out of old animal things that had been outgrown. Though I doubt if she fashioned the human soul out of an old animal soul that had been outgrown. We may have inherited our bodies from the beasts, but not the spiritual part of us. That came down from above, not up from beneath. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Most of nature's new creations are only old things made over. She uses the

fruit of one generation for the seed of the next, and tries to improve upon her work a little in each new generation. We know more than our fathers did, and our children will know more than we do. There is no occasion, however, for one generation to play the Pharisee to another. It was not our fathers' fault that they lived before us, nor is it to our credit that we live after them.

We should not despise the wisdom of our fathers. The world has not lived all these years in vain. Nor should we be satisfied with it. The end is not yet. We should begin where our fathers leave off, but shame on us if our children find us there. We cannot pay our fathers the debt we owe them. They are dead and gone. We can only pay it to our children. We should look back only to keep our bearing, and to get the direction of progress, that we may project it into the future along the same lines. And there is plenty of room in the future, Elisha. Never fear. Don't be afraid of falling off the edge of the world. It is a long way back to the beginning, but it is perhaps a longer way forward to the end; and the best is yet to be. The golden age is not behind us. It is yonder "where the days bury their suns, in the dear golden west."

CHAPTER XI

THE ANSWER OF THE TONGUE

The prophet should not look upon himself as the final depository of truth, Elisha. He should not be content simply to stock his own soul with it. It is his to have and to hold, but not to keep for himself. Freely he has received, freely he should give. He is a man before he is a prophet, but he is also a prophet after he is a man. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and his people should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts to them." He should not be a miser of truth, but a minister of it. He must pass it on to others, and in so doing he does not rob himself. Rather the contrary.

There is no respect of persons with God, Elisha. He sends His rain upon the just and unjust alike, and so He gives His truth. It is not for one, but for all; not for an elect few, but for the needy many; not for the schools, but for the market-place; not for classes, but for the masses; not for academic purposes, but for practical purposes of life and character; not for scribes and Pharisees only, but for publicans and sinners as well. It knows no aristocracy, and recognises no superior claim.

Don't be afraid to part with the most precious truths to the most unpromising people, Elisha. The Master was not. The first of all truths was spoken, not to the Seventy in solemn assembly, but to a Samaritan woman, and not a very good woman at that, at a chance meeting by Jacob's

well. How painfully had sage and seer and philosopher groped for that truth! The Pharisees would not even have spoken to the woman, much less have declared to her so choice a truth. And to whom did Jesus first declare Himself without ambiguity? Not to the High Priest who stood in the room of Aaron, nor to the Pharisees who sat in Moses's seat; but to a poor beggar man in the streets of Jerusalem. "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him?" Not that I may try him with questions, or see him perform a miracle, but that I may believe on Him. "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." He left Annas and Herod and Pilate to guess, but He did not leave this poor man in doubt. They that were whole needed not a physician, but they that were sick. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He had a word for the elder brother, and He did not hesitate to speak it, but His mission was to the prodigal son.

The words of Jesus have to do with the choicest goods of the soul, and they were spoken for the most part to the disowned and disinherited of earth. He did not cast His pearls before swine, but there were no swine among God's children. Some of them had fallen among swine, but they were not swine. They were as far from swine as the east is from the west, as man is from beast. Between them and swine there was a great gulf fixed, the gulf which divides flesh from spirit. The best of truths were none too good for the worst of men. He drew aside His skirts from no one. The smallest were not too humble, and the lowest were not too vile. Others sometimes feared for Him, but he never feared for Himself. His disciples would have kept little children from Him, and the Pharisees would have kept Him from publicans and sinners; but He rebuked them all, and opened His arms to the

children, and the gates of His kingdom to publicans and sinners. He was never too busy to notice little children, and never too good to associate with sinners.

And the Pharisees are not all dead yet, Elisha. They are still trying, in their mistaken zeal, to shield Him from rough contact with the world, still trying to protect Him from His friends as well as from His enemies. They lock Him up in cloisters, and veil Him with doctrines, and hide Him behind stained-glass windows. They dissect Him in their schools, and test Him in their laboratories, and try Him with scalpel and microscope, until His own mother would not know Him. We ask for a Man, and they give us a lay figure in philosophy. We look for His cross, and find that it has been turned into a crossbeam upon which to hang dogma. They have taken away our Lord, and we know not where they have laid Him. All that they tell us may be true, but we long somehow to get away from it all to the old sunny days in Galilee. Don't mistake the longing in the eyes that will look up into yours, Elisha. They would see Jesus, and not a picture of Him. The world wants Him, and not a theory of Him. It went out in multitudes to hear Him once, neglecting its work and forgetting to eat; and it will do it again, if you give it a chance. Bring Him out of the cloister, and strip away the grave-clothes in which men have buried Him. Give Him to the man on the street. Let Him loose in the crowds. They will jostle Him in their wild passion, and touch His garments with their rough hands; but never fear, Elisha. He does not shrink from the touch. He understands. His own hands were hard with homely toil. Leave Him alone with the common people. He will take care of them, and they will take care of Him.

God's word is for all who will hear it, Elisha, and you

cannot tell who will hear until it is spoken. It sometimes meets with rejection in the most likely quarters, and with acceptance in the most unlikely. Pharisees may turn a deaf ear to it, and publicans hear it gladly. You can never tell. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it bringeth the word, or whither it will carry it. Cast your bread broadcast upon the waters. It will find hungry souls somewhere, and feed them.

Never fear for your message, Elisha. God will take care of it. And never fear for the messenger. God will take care of him. It does not matter so much what happens to the messenger after he has delivered his message, whether men delight to honour him or cast out his name as evil; but God will see to that. Not a sparrow falls without His notice. He does not promise you ease, or honour, or immunity from hardship; but He does promise that not one hair of your head shall be eternally harmed.

God's first word to the prophet is, "See," and the second, "Declare what thou seest." Declare it at all hazards. Whether men like it or not, whether they hear it with joy or reject it with scorn. It is the prophet's business to speak the truth, and the people's business to hear it. God will hold him to account for the way it is spoken, and them for the way it is received. Woe to him if he does not speak it, woe to them if they do not hear it. Your message will not always be pleasant to men, Elisha; not if you try to please God. It will rebuke, and chasten, and condemn; and men do not like to be condemned. Dull men will misunderstand you, and bad men will hate you. But be not afraid of their faces. Cry aloud, and spare not. Have no fear but the fear of God before your eyes. If

you seek to please men, you will not be the servant of Christ.

You must have convictions, but you must also have the courage of them. And you will have need of courage, and that of the highest order. The courage of the soldier is one, and that of the prophet is another. The chances are that you will never be called upon to face death on the battlefield, high, heroic, romantic, with the world looking on; but you will be called upon many times to face it in solitary places, slow, cruel, unromantic, with no eye on you but the All-seeing. It is hard to play the hero there, Elisha, where no one knows, or cares perhaps, that you are playing it. Flesh and blood has suffered much in this world, and endured many hardships on land and sea, but nowhere more than in that lonely place between God and man, where the passions of one are for ever at war with the counsels of the other. How many noble souls have been wrung there, how many great hearts broken. And the peril is still there, Elisha, and the risk to life and limb. Don't presume too much upon our boasted civilisation, or be misled by its show of refinement. The beast has shed its tail, but not its claws. They are only sheathed. The world is not less cruel, but only more refined in its cruelty. It no longer burns at the stake, or stretches upon the gibbet; but it still knows how to hate with cruel hatred, and it has many modern ways of making its displeasure felt. It has not thrown away its instruments of torture, it has only sharpened them to a finer edge. It still has many secret thumbscrews which it knows how to use with telling effect.

Be not deceived, Elisha, neither be afraid. You will at least win the world's respect by telling it the truth, whether you win its good will or not. You may make it

your enemy by telling it the truth, but it has more respect for an honest enemy than for a time-serving friend. It may turn against you to your face, and say all manner of evil against you with its lips; but in its secret heart it will honour you. There is no one whom the world despises quite so much, whatever it may say to the contrary, as the man who sells his soul to win its praise; and there is no one whom it respects quite so much, whatever it may say to the contrary, as the man who braves its wrath to tell it the truth. I have been called upon to bear some very unpalatable messages to Ahab in my day, and have had to run for my life more than once, but even so I daresay he has more respect for Elijah than he has for his own false prophets. There were two prophets in Florence in the days of Lorenzo the Magnificent, but only to one did the king send in his last moments. Fra Mariano had prophesied smooth things to him, and Fra Girolamo rough things; and he had heaped honours upon one, and reproaches upon the other; but when he came down to the dark river, and wanted someone to pilot him over, he passed by the orator of San Gallo and sent for the friar of St. Mark's, the man who had dared to tell him the truth. We do not care to talk to a coward when we go to meet our God, especially when we go with such sins on our souls as those which stained the life of Lorenzo.

There is no more arrant coward in all the world, Elisha, than the man whom God sends with a message, and yet who fears to speak it. No matter what ties his tongue, no matter what considerations seal his lips, he is the worst coward under the sun, because he is playing the coward at the most critical point of life. If there is shame to the man who turns coward on the threshold of his home, where the safety of his family is imperiled, or on the bat-

tlefield, where the honour of his country is at stake, how much greater shame to him who plays the coward in the house of God, where men come to seek the law at his mouth. He is betraying the counsels of high heaven, and stopping the message of God Almighty. Let him declare what he seeth at whatever peril. It may be as much as his life is worth to speak it, but let him speak it nevertheless.

What did you say, Elisha? Speak a little louder, I am rather hard of hearing. A man must live, by fair means or foul? No wonder you hesitated to speak it out. A man does not like to hear himself say such things, much less to let others hear him. Who told you that you must live, by all means and at all costs? Jesus did not think so, nor the Covenanters, nor the multitudes of brave fellows who have laid down their young bodies for civilisation to walk over to victory. Think you that they loved life less than you and I love it, or that they would not have gladly lived out their days? They lived as long as they could honourably, and then died honourably, as becometh a man and a Christian. It is the devil's lie that we must live at all hazards. We do not have to live when the world charges too high for life, and death is less expensive to our souls. We can die, and leave our blood to cry out against the injustice of an established order that makes such a death necessary.

Look well to your secret thoughts, Elisha, and see that they square with the words of your mouth. These are times which try the souls of prophets. The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are on edge. The thoughts of men are changing. We look at old questions from a different angle, and see old truths in a new light. The accent of the Gospel has shifted, and yet the established order remains. The thoughts of our fathers

are not our thoughts, nor are their ways our ways; and yet we stand in our fathers' shoes, and preach from their pulpits. There is the peril, Elisha, and it is as subtle as the serpent which beguiled Eve. You may feel called upon to preach your fathers' gospel, whether you believe it or not. Beware, Elisha, beware. The man who believes one thing and preaches another is a hypocrite before high heaven, and it is time we were calling things by their right name. We have dodged the issue all too long. We are beginning to hear vague whispers about "ministerial honesty"; not to our faces, but behind our backs, and it is there that the world says what it thinks about us. It is only a straw, but it tells which way the wind is blowing. The world is beginning to have its doubts. Does the present-day prophet come by his commission honestly, and does he keep it honestly? Does he subscribe to anything that he does not believe in his secret heart? Did he tell the whole truth to his brethren before they laid hands on him, and does he tell it to his people on Sunday? Is he keeping back anything? Has he seen any new light that he is hiding under a bushel for fear of men?

It is time we were asking these questions of our secret souls, Elisha, and answering them honestly before God. We are not on the witness stand, to be sure, under oath to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth"; but we are in a far more sacred place, on our honour to declare God's whole counsel for our generation; nothing more, nothing less. If we cannot either believe what we preach, or preach what we believe, then in all honesty let us unfrock ourselves of the prophet's mantle. Let us have done with doubt and dissembling. The world wants to know just where we stand, and it has a right to know. It is time we spoke out, and let it know what is in

our secret hearts. If there is anything there contrary to our preaching, it will know; and if not, it will know. Let us come out into the open and declare ourselves. The soul of the prophet should be as luminous as day.

Make a clean breast of it, Elisha. Unburden your soul of the whole truth. It will burn like fire in your bones if you do not. And a great peace will come to you when you do. Try it and see. A good woman once said to me, after the delivery of a rather unpalatable message, "I hope you feel better since you got that out of your system." And I did, Elisha, decidedly better. Not exactly in the way she meant to imply, to be sure; but no matter. She had her say, and I had had mine. The burden of the word of the Lord had been removed in both cases. There is much pleasure in the pursuit of truth, and also in its possession, but more in the expression of it. It is more blessed to give than to receive. The truth craves expression just as naturally as the body craves exercise. Nature has put a premium upon the satisfaction of all wholesome appetite. It is good to drink when you are thirsty, and rest when you are tired; and so it is good to speak when you have something to say. But it is a great hardship to speak when you haven't anything to say, Elisha. It is like eating when you are not hungry. God has put a premium upon the delivery of His word. If there is satisfaction in giving people a "piece of our mind," how much more should there be in giving them a piece of God's mind. There is such a sense of relief in knowing that God's message has reached its destination in safety. It has not miscarried in our hands, but has been delivered whole to those to whom it was sent. They may hate us for it, or love us, but they know the truth in either case. If they go on as before, it will be with their eyes open. Our skirts

are clear. Paul suffered much at the hands of the Ephesians, and barely escaped with his life, but it was worth it all to be able to say to them at the last, "I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." The man who has done that can lie down and sleep his last long sleep in peace. He has unburdened his soul of the word of the Lord.

Speak your mind, Elisha, fully and frankly; but carefully, especially if it contains new truth, and you would get it a fair hearing. Be wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove. It is comparatively easy to be either, it is infinitely hard to be both at one and the same time. They are so difficult of combination, and yet so happy in combination, and so indispensable to the prophet who would present new truth acceptably. There are some people who never meet a stranger; but the great majority are shy with strangers, and give their confidence gingerly. It is so easy to frighten them away. A single misstep, or misspoken word, and they are off like a shy bird, and your chance is gone. New truth calls for mental readjustments. It means original thought, and so very few people like to do their own thinking. It is such a bother. It is so much easier to farm it out to others. You will have to cross ingrained prejudices, and disturb the slumbers of cherished beliefs; but try to make the crossing gracefully, with the least possible friction and the minimum amount of noise. If you can get by without waking old prejudices and antagonising preconceived opinions, you will do well; but you will have to make the crossing with the footfall of a cat, if you succeed. They are light sleepers, and rise up at the voice of a bird. You will have to speak in parable, and utter dark sayings, not at first understood. It will require a deft touch, and a well-bridled tongue.

You will have need of tact, and kindness, and almost infinite patience—the patience of nature with growing trees and ripening grain, and the patience of God with plodding men and women.

It is no light task to teach religious truth to this present age, Elisha. It is a man-sized job. The times are out of joint. The world is readjusting its thinking and redrawing its boundary lines. It is making over its mental maps. Men are pioneering in all directions. There is much truth in various quarters, but it is still at large in the common consciousness, shadowy and undefined. In many places men are standing at the parting of the ways, uncertain which road to take. They somehow fear that if they take either, they will wish they had taken the other; and so in many cases they are taking neither. They are groping about blindly, hoping to stumble upon the right path by accident. A guess is as good as anything if it hits, and so they are guessing. Who will show us any good? That is the question they are asking on every hand, and getting no certain answer. Never was the world in such sore need of pathfinders, and never has pathfinding been more difficult. To sound a certain note in this uncertain age, to point to a plain path where there are so many crossing and re-crossing, to find new paths for feet that have reached the end of old ones, to present old truth in a way that will not tire and new truth in a way that will not offend; that is the work which is cut out for you, Elisha, and it is as hard as nails.

I would not discourage you, Elisha, or conceal from you the sunny side of your work. Nor would I hide from you its sterner side. I would only forewarn you, and so forearm you for your task. You have hard sailing ahead, and you might as well know it beforehand. God is honest

with His prophets and tells them frankly what to expect. That is the way He tests them. If the prospect cows your spirit, you are not the man God is looking for, and the sooner you know it, and the sooner He knows it, the better. If you are looking for an easy job, I would advise you to go hire yourself out to split rails, or something like that. You will find plenty of tough timber among trees—red elm, for instance, that will resist the wedge to the last knot, but nothing like what you will find in folks. Getting a wedge through the devious grain of an elm is no light task, but it is child's play beside getting the truth into some people's heads. I have tried both, and I know. I used to keep a few old trees out in my back yard, just to try myself out on when I got tired of fiddling with the stuff you and I are made of, Elisha, and I would commend it to you as a sort of safety-valve. You will find it a mighty good way to let off the extra steam which accumulates in your bones. I have known prophets to blow up for lack of it.

If you could just take a sledge-hammer and drive the truth home, as you would send a nail into hard wood, the prophet's task would be comparatively easy. And you will be tempted to do just that, Elisha, but beware. The winning of men to the truth is a fine art. You cannot go about it as if you were splitting rails. It is not a rail-splitting job. Not that a rail-splitter could not do it, if he were called. Shepherds have done it, and fishermen, and carpenters. But it is not to be done with a maul and wedge. The weapon of the spirit is not a hammer, but a sword. They both get a man through barriers, but there is a radical difference in the way they do it. One hammers down, the other pierces through. One leaves wreck and ruin behind it, the other only a clean cut, if it have a fine edge

and be used by a dexterous hand. What matter though you get the truth into a man's head, if you pull his house down over his head in doing it? A man must have a house to live in, as well as furniture to go in it. Whenever a prophet leaves off fencing and thrusting with the sword of the spirit, and falls to beating folks over the head with it, his usefulness is at an end. I have seen prophets laying about them with the sword as if it were a battering-ram. They only do violence to their weapon, and leave men with sore heads.

You are on fire with new truth, Elisha. I can see it in your eyes. You can hardly wait to tell the world about it. I know. I have felt the consuming heat of it in my own bones. But let me drop a word of warning before you go. Perhaps, after all, young prophets have more need to borrow caution than courage. They are more apt to err on the side of courage. It is old men who are in danger of becoming over-careful and conservative. I would not for the world dash cold water on your ardour, Elisha. God forbid. It is fire from God's altar, and far be it from me to put it out. I would only put you on your guard. The spirits of the prophets should be subject to the prophets. Fire is a useful servant, but a hard master. It warms our hearthstones, and lights our homes, when properly handled; but it burns them down over our heads, and leaves us desolate, when it escapes from our control. Some men have zeal without knowledge, and others knowledge without zeal, as if a man could not have both at one and the same time. Zeal is a consuming fire without knowledge, and knowledge is a dead weight without zeal. God means that they should go together, and what God has joined together let not man put asunder.

I would save you much confusion of face, Elisha, and

your people much confusion of faith. I would at least keep you from the mistakes which I have made. God may not have given me more of this world's wisdom than He has given you; but I have lived longer than you have, and have seen more of life. I have not been conspicuously successful, as men count success in this world. Perhaps some would consider me a failure. I have had none of this world's honours heaped upon me, nor am I leaving any of its goods behind. I have not made any great noise in the world to attract the attention of men to me. I have not cared for notoriety. I have preferred humble and honourable obscurity. I have only tried to do my simple duty from day to day, as God gave me to see it. I have not made any bones about it, or any fuss over it. But I have lived, and learned from life, and I would give you the benefit of the knowledge which I have so hardly gained. I know that advice is counted cheap, Elisha, and it is to the man who gets it, but not to the man who gives it. It has cost me dearly, and I would have someone profit by it. It is too late for it to profit me here, and I know not whether it will apply hereafter. That is one of the most unfortunate things about life, Elisha. Just about the time we have fairly learned to live, and do our work with reasonable skill, we have to go hence and leave it. The knowledge we gain so patiently and painfully through the years is very largely thrown away if we cannot use it whither we go or leave it to those who follow in our footsteps.

If we could only have the experience we end with to begin with, what a world of trouble it would save us. But if we cannot have our own experience to begin with, we can have that of others. The accumulated wisdom of all the ages is at our service, if we know how to command

it and are wise enough to profit by it. That is what history is for, Elisha. Not for our amusement, or entertainment, but for our instruction; and happy is the man who reads it understandingly. All these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. He is a wise man who uses the experience of others to save him the necessity of repeating the same experience in his own case with the same results. He begins where his fathers leave off, instead of going back to where they began, and so saves the race the time and trouble of travelling the same road more than once and thereby greatly accelerates its progress. We should take the experience of those who go before us, and enrich it with our own, and pass it on to those who come after us; so adding to God's great sum, and laying up treasure for each new generation to draw upon.

You will pardon me, Elisha, if I cast my experience in a somewhat negative form, for your warning rather than your instruction. Not that prophesying, like the Barnacles' theory of government, is the art of "how not to do it." Far from it. You cannot raise a prophet on Don'ts any more than you can raise a boy on them. Preaching is positive, not negative; as positive as life, and as pressing. It is only because that is the light in which my experience most habitually appears to me, and so that is the light in which I give it to you. As I look back upon my life from the close of it, its failures loom larger in my eyes than its successes, perhaps because there have been so many more of them; and so I am going to point lessons from its failures, rather than its successes. If I had my life to live over again, I would certainly not do some things which I have done, or I would do them in a different way; that

is the reason I am telling you not to do them, Elisha, or to do them in a different way. I cannot undo what I have done, but you can keep from doing it. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That is the meaning of these Don'ts, Elisha, which may look rather discouraging upon the face of them. They are warning fingers held up where I have failed, that you may avoid the same mistakes, and so be wiser in your generation than I have been in mine.

CHAPTER XII

DON'TS FOR PROPHETS

I

DON'T sound a trumpet before you, Elisha, when you go to announce new truth. Don't proclaim it from the housetops, as if the world were hard of hearing. Speak it quietly in the ears of men, without assumption of superior wisdom. Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth. In vain is the net set in sight of a bird. If you serve notice on your hearers beforehand, they will be on their guard, and the chances are that you will lose your case before you have stated it. Like as not they will not stop to consider whether it is new or old, if you do not tell them. You cannot tell how old truth is from the sound of it. It will do them just as much good, whether they know it is new or not. Leave them in blissful ignorance of the fact that they are hearing new truth. Take them unawares. You will not need to deceive, but you will have to disguise. Your Master did. His parables are truth in disguise. They concealed truth for the time being in order to reveal it afterward. He caught his hearers with guile. They had the truth, and were gone with it, before they knew it. It was only long afterward, perhaps, when they were back with their nets or about their business again, that they woke up to the fact that they were in possession of new truth. But it was too

late then. They had it, for better, for worse, and there was no gainsaying it. If you tread softly, Elisha, and put on no airs, you will be able to get the truth into men's ears before they have time to stop them.

II

Don't thresh out the truth before your people, Elisha. Go into your closet and shut your door to do that. The pulpit is not a threshing-floor, where the chaff is winnowed from the wheat; it is not a mill, where the wheat is ground into flour; it is not an oven, where the flour is baked into bread. It is a table, where the bread of life is served to hungry souls. All the other processes are prior and preliminary to the final process of breaking bread to men, and only the last step should be taken in public. Do your winnowing before you go into the pulpit. If you try to do it before your people, they are liable to get more chaff than wheat, because there is so much more of it, and it is so much lighter. The wheat falls to the ground, while the chaff flies about in the air. I have listened to prophets, Elisha, when the air about them was so thick with chaff you could hardly see your hand before you. Their hearers could not see the wheat for the chaff. They could not get heads or tails of the prophet's message. They only heard a great noise of threshing, and went away with their eyes full of dust. Men do not come out to hear a reed shaken by the wind, or to see a man clothed in soft raiment. They go to the woods to hear the one, and to kings' houses to see the other. They come out to hear a human soul vibrating with the spirit of God. What they want is not an intellectual performance, or an oratorical display, but a living message. They do not care so much how you came

by it as that you have it, and that you are sure it is from God. Don't let your people see the tools of your trade, or hear the noise of your digging. Leave all that behind you in your closet. Go to the morning-glory, Elisha, consider its ways and be wise. It blooms under cover of darkness, and has the flower ready against the dawn. Study with your Father who is in secret, and he will reward you openly before your people.

III

Don't preach your doubts, Elisha. The world has enough of its own. There will be times when you will not have much else to preach, and you will feel called upon to preach something. Prophets are expected to talk, whether they have anything to say or not. You will be tempted to speak when you have no message, but don't do it, Elisha. Better silence in your pulpit than an uncertain sound. Any fool can talk, but it takes a wise man to know when to keep still. Wait until the voice has come. "Who hath spoken when I have not spoken?" saith the Lord. Let God speak first. And He will, if you give Him time. You will have your doubts, if you think for yourself upon the great mysteries of life, but keep them to yourself. Doubt does not get us anywhere. It is faith that saves, and removes mountains, and stops the mouth of lions, and quenches the violence of fire. Don't speak prematurely. Wait until you have arrived at a belief. Preach what you know, if it can be known; what you believe, if it cannot be known. This age of doubt is dying for a little bit of faith, as well as for a little bit of love. It does not resent authority, if it is the right kind. It knows the voice of God when it hears it.

IV

Don't take away any man's faith until you have a better one to give him in return. A poor faith is better than none at all. We can no more live without faith than we can live without air. It is the very breath of our nostrils. A man must have something to believe in. If you take away his God, he will believe in spooks. He will catch at the first straw that comes along. A man will eat most anything before he will starve. Nature abhors a vacuum, whether in a man's stomach or in his head. Remember the man who swept and garnished his house, and then left it empty. The last state of that man was worse than the first.

V

Don't disturb the faith of old folks, Elisha, whether dead or alive. It is unfair, if they are dead. They are not here to speak for themselves. It is unkind, if they are living. They are here to hear, and it will give them pain. Respect the memory of the dead, and the feelings of the living. Things have come to a sorry pass when a young prophet can find nothing better to do than throw stones at his ancestors. There are too many grievous wrongs to be righted for that, too many crying evils to be done from the earth. Have respect for gray hairs, Elisha, whether on the heads of old folks or inside of them. Don't bring them down to the grave in sorrow and confusion. They are comfortable in their old houses, as thoroughly at home in them as you are in your new one. They were born and raised in them. Don't pull them down over their heads, and turn them out to die. There

is nothing sadder than to be turned out of doors in your old age. Old folks do not take kindly to change, whether from one house to another or from one faith to another. They have neither the time nor the inclination to change. It takes time to reform our faith, and readjust our lives to it, and they have not many years left. Leave them alone in their old houses. They have weathered the storms of many years in them, and they can manage to make out for the rest of their lives. A faith that is good enough to live by will do to die by. Life is harder than death, and calls for a stronger faith. Anybody can die, but it takes a brave man to live, when life is hard and all the odds are against him. Beware how you judge your elders, Elisha, and pass sentence upon their beliefs. It may be that they are right, after all, and you are wrong. Who knows? They have at least tried their faith longer than you have yours, and the final test of all faith is life, and the final fruit of it is character. Have you as much to show for your faith as they have for theirs? Wait until you have tried it out upon as many of the vicissitudes of life, wait until you have weathered as many storms and looked into the faces of as many of your dead, before you say that your faith is superior to theirs.

VI

Don't tear down, Elisha. Build up. The work of destruction has been done, and overdone. The old order is in ruins all about us. There is hardly left one stone upon another that has not been pulled down. It is high time new buildings were rising upon the ruins of the old. The times cry aloud for construction. It is one thing to criticise the established order, it is quite a different thing

to roll up your sleeves and improve upon it. The best cure for criticism is hard work. The Gospel is not critical, but kindly in spirit. It is not destructive, but constructive. Jesus came not to destroy, but to fulfill. The Baptist laid the axe to the root of the tree, the Master cast the seed into the soil. One cleared the ground for the other. John was the last of the old school, Jesus the first of the new. Don't forget which master you serve, Elisha. Paul found some of John's disciples at Ephesus, who did not know that their master was dead: and you will still find them here and there, Elisha, laying about them with the axe. They do not know that the war is over. The best way to combat error is to proclaim the truth, and the best way to condemn sin is to preach righteousness. Paul said not a word to Felix about his sins. Perhaps he did not know them. He preached righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come; and the king trembled. Felix knew, and God knew. Overcome evil with good, Elisha, and error with truth. The only cure for darkness is light. It is nothing but the absence of light. You cannot drive it out with a broom. You will only break up the furniture in the dark. Don't beat the air with your fists, Elisha. Turn on the light. Men may love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, but you cannot help that. It is your business to see that they have the light, whether they like it or not.

You are a servant of the Gospel, Elisha, and the fundamental process of the Christian life is not repression, but expression. Not that we can give free rein to everything there is in us, on the assumption that it is good because it is there. Far from it. Solomon tried that, and was led astray. Whatsoever his eyes desired he kept not from them, he withheld not his heart from any joy;

and the end of it was vanity, and bitterness of spirit. There are some things within us which must be denied, even crucified; and yet, after all, the main business of life is to put forth what God puts within.

VII

Don't knock the other fellow's opinions, Elisha. Preach your own. Don't go about with a chip on your shoulder looking for trouble. You will find enough without looking for it. Train your guns on the enemy, and not on your friends. Seekers after truth should present an undivided front to falsehood. Don't be an Ishmaelite, your hand against every man and every man's hand against you. The war of words is over. Strike hands with your fellows. We are different members of the same body. Each member has its own particular place to fill, and its own peculiar function to perform. They are mutually dependent upon each other. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of thee. How would the head get anywhere without the feet, or how could the hand do anything without the eye to direct it? We are all members one of another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Grant to the other fellow the same rights that you claim for yourself. It is a poor right that will not work both ways. He has just as much right to his opinion as you have to yours. He came by it just as honestly, and holds it just as sincerely. And he is just as liable to be right in his opinion as you are in yours. You think you are right, and he thinks he is right. Who is to judge between you?

It must be someone who is over you both, and there is but One. Who art thou that judgeth another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. After all, there may not be as much difference between you and the other fellow as you think. It may be only a difference in point of view. You and he may see but different sides of the same truth. God does not give all the truth to one man. He gives different parts to different men, with the intention that they all get together and piece out the whole truth. It is the getting together that is so difficult. It requires mutual concessions and compromises. Be willing to bring your little mite, Elisha, and put it alongside of the fruits of others' labours, and so make up God's great sum.

VIII

Don't quarrel with your neighbour across the way over the husks of truth. And most of the great historic quarrels have been over husks. Most men agree when it comes to the kernel, and it is the kernel that counts. The husk was made for the kernel, not the kernel for the husk. It is not the earthen vessel that is important, but the heavenly treasure which it contains. How men have fallen out over the earthen vessels, one insisting that they were clay, another that they were stone, to the utter neglect of the heavenly treasure. In many cases, the controversy has ended in the breaking of the earthen vessels, and the consequent loss of the heavenly treasure. The husk is always on the outside, the kernel within. "Not first that which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." That is the order of nature, and the order of nature is the order of God. Perhaps that is the reason there is so much ado over the

husks. They are so much more apparent to the naked eye. We come to the husk first; and too many of us, I fear, never get any further. We feed our people on husks, and then wonder that they starve to death.

Let the Book speak for itself, Elisha. And it will if you give it a chance. Prophets meddle with it much more than is necessary. It is a plain man's book. It is in his language, and level with his life. It was written for the most part by common men for common men, to set forth the common duties of life; and common men can understand it, when they are let alone. It is mostly when theologians attempt to explain it that they become confused. It was not written to explain how the world was made, or how our bodies are put together. We can find out those things, and hundreds of others like them, for ourselves; or if we never find them out, we are none the worse morally. But who by searching can find out God? That is the supreme question, and the Book contains the final answer to it. Suppose Moses did believe that the earth was made in six days, as a man would build a house? What of it? The earth is here, solid and substantial under our feet. The Bible puts God at the beginning of it, and all the king's horses and all the king's men have not been able to take Him away. The process of creation is secondary, and that is what all this modern fuss is about. What if David did believe that the seat of life is in the liver? Do we yet know where it is, or that life has any seat? It evidently has a source, and a high one, judging from the driving power of it; but whether it has any seat, either within or without us, is another question. It seems to be on the go most of the time, so far as we can see, and it is about all we can do to keep up with it. It leads us such a merry chase over land and sea, and we are

so out of breath with the running when it pauses for a few moments, we have no time nor inclination to look about us and see where it stops with us. We are too glad to rest and recover our breath for the next heat, and by the time our breath has caught up with us it is off again. It is hard to corner such a will-o'-the-wisp as that. It is our business to keep it headed in the right direction, and upon that the Book leaves no doubt. It is not so anxious to discover whence we came as to determine where we are going. It sheds a bright light upon the parting of the ways, and it is not indifferent as to which way we take. "Choose life, choose life," it shouts in trumpet tones all the way from Sinai to Calvary. It does not matter so much what kind of a trumpet it uses, whether a silver flute or a ram's horn, so it gives forth no uncertain sound. It employs many figures of speech, metaphor, and simile, and parable, and allegory, and apocalypse; but it speaks but one message.

He is a blind prophet who cannot see that the Bible is a text-book of life, and not a scientific or philosophical treatise. It recognises sin, and points to the remedy for it; but it throws no light on the origin of evil. We are in the presence of God from beginning to end, but we never once see through the mystery of His person. Man is next to God under the sun, and the emphasis is everywhere placed on the spiritual side of Him; but there is not a word as to the mysterious relation between His soul and body, or how one can survive the other. From first to last, the Book is intent upon telling us how to live, and not how we came to be alive. That is the open secret of the long narrative. Every story has a moral; not tacked on at the end of it, after the manner of Æsop, but woven into the very fibre of it, after the manner of Jesus. We are not told

whether the story is fact or fiction, romantic history or historical romance. The author does not seem to think it worth while, if he stops to think about it. He is too eager to point the moral of it. He goes straight to that like a bullet to its mark. He wastes no time upon the earthen vessel. It is surpassingly beautiful in many instances, but it is very largely unconscious. It is not studied. It springs up spontaneously in the author's soul; a natural product, rather than a work of art. The Hebrews knew nothing of "art for art's sake," but only art for God's sake.

Take the Jonah story, for instance, which has been such a bone of contention in the schools. Is it history or satire, fact or fiction? Shall we place it alongside of the conquest of Canaan, or the parable of the Prodigal Son? That is the question which has set the theologians by the ears, but who shall say that it was uppermost in the mind of the author? It misses the mark of the story. The tale was not told to show how big a whale's belly is, or how long a man can remain in it and live, but to show how big God's heart is, and how far he will go to forgive. If we get that, it does not matter so very much what we think of the fish story; and if we miss that, we have read the story in vain. Who ever stops to ask whether the parables of Jesus are true as to fact? He who does misses the real point of them. Why should we be such sticklers for fact, after all, or such enemies of fiction, as if it were the antithesis of truth? The real contrast is not between truth and fiction, but between truth and error. Fiction may convey truth, no less than fact. A great many facts are false to life, and a great deal of fiction is true to it. We have paid altogether too much attention to the vehicle of truth, and too little to the truth itself. It does not matter

so much how the truth gets to us, whether by fact or by fiction, so it reaches us, and so we believe.

IX

Don't preach either lower or higher criticism, Elisha. For God's sake, and your own soul's sake, don't. Not that the Bible will not bear investigation, and that of the most painstaking sort, or that it should be exempted from it. Other literature has been subjected to criticism, and there is no reason why this Book should not. Our efforts to shield it only cast suspicion upon it. Whenever the champions of any book or any theory have to run to its rescue every time somebody points his finger at it, it is time a committee of investigation were appointed. The chances are that you will discover sand in its foundation. Let men train their microscopes upon it. It will bear the white light of investigation. If it will not, we cannot know it too soon. But it will; and it has. It has stood the acid test of time and tide. It has been sifted through thousands of years, and all the tides which come and go in the affairs of men have passed over it. No book has been so tried in the crucible of criticism, and it has come forth as gold out of the fire.

Nor is it that honest criticism of the Book is irreverent, or actuated by unworthy motives. It is not strange that men seek to know how the world came by this Book; what hands wrought upon it, and how they wrought. It would be strange if they did not. We are naturally interested in any great monumental work that has been done under the sun, and we do well to be. Who would not like to know how the pyramids of Egypt went up, or what master hand fashioned the countenance of the Sphinx? And so with

this wonderful Book. Who would not like to know how it came from God through man; how it was wrought out in the consciousness of the Hebrew race; whether by ordinary methods of inspiration, or by extraordinary methods? And the great souls who wrought here, so mightily with God and man. What would we not give to know more about them? We are sure that they would be well worth knowing. They were no mean souls. These are not the footprints of pygmies we are following. They are too large, and the distance is too great between them. What great strides they took toward God, and with what difficulty do we follow them. There were giants in the earth in those days. They reveal gigantic proportions in every line and lineament of their souls. And what adventures they had with God, what chances they took with men. These great truths were not dreamed out in the cloister, or spun out in the schools. They were struck out of human souls at white heat. We can feel the warmth of them on our faces even at this distance of time and space. They travelled to the far edge of the desert, and climbed to the top of high mountains, to look into the face of God. They saw Him face to face, and talked with Him as a man talks with his friend. These pictures of the Eternal were taken at close range. They must have seen much, and suffered much, and taken many long and lonely journeys in the spirit, with no one but God for company. But whether they were men or women, whether they were born in this place or that, whether they were dark or fair, we may not know. We hear the beating of their great hearts, but we cannot see the fashion of their countenance. Time has taken its toll of them. They have gone the way of all the earth, and many of their names are forgotten; but their burning words are ringing throughout the world,

and will ring to the end of time. We are sorry that the story of their lives has been lost, we are glad that the record of their souls has been preserved.

It is not because biblical criticism is irreverent in the prophet's mouth, but simply because it is irrelevant to his purpose. It may be all right in the schools, but it is out of place in the pulpit. It is beside the mark. Most of the higher criticism goes over men's heads, and most of the lower strikes beneath their feet. Neither strikes men where they live, and that is the prophet's aim. Drive straight at the hearts of men, Elisha. Out of it are the issues of life, and it is with the ultimate issues of life that you have to do. Your business is with the souls of men, and you should know where to find them. You will find the master of the house at home, if you seek him in the right place. Folks don't live in the upper story of their houses. They may try to make you think they do, but they don't. They only sleep there. Perhaps that is why they go to sleep under so much of our preaching. It is not the date or the author of a book that the world needs, but its burning message. Don't waste any time over the authorship of the Pentateuch. Lay the Ten Words on the consciences of your hearers. It is immaterial to your business whether there were two Isaiahs or one. The fifty-third chapter of the book remains the same, whether it was written by the first Isaiah or the second. What matter whether David wrote all the Psalms which bear his name or not? How many of us ever stop to read the titles? We know that the Twenty-third must have been written by someone who had kept sheep, and the Eighth by someone who had looked long at the stars. I charge you, Elisha, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and

His kingdom; preach the Word, and not what somebody has said about it.

X

Don't try to answer unanswerable questions, Elisha. Your people will sidetrack you if they can. They will want to know who Cain's wife was, and where the Garden of Eden was located. They will ask all sorts of fool questions to keep you off the main question. It is so much easier to speculate about Cain's wife than it is to provide for your own wife, Elisha. Don't encourage your people in idle curiosity, when their souls are starving for the bread of life. It is not so important that they know where the Garden of Eden once was as that they know where it is now. It is wherever man is, and woman; wherever rivers run, and birds sing, and God walks in the cool of the day. And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil still grows in the midst of it, where we must pass it every day on our way to our work; and the serpent is still there among the branches, telling the same old lie with which he deceived the first man and woman.

There are some prophets who set themselves up to answer all questions, from, Who was Cain's wife? to, When will the world come to an end? They presume to know more than their Master. Be not one of them, Elisha. Don't be ashamed to confess your ignorance before men. Your Master was not. If He could afford to do it, you can. He did not know the day or the hour of His second coming, and He said so frankly; and the world thinks none the less of Him for it. You don't know it all, Elisha. You may think you do, but you don't. You have much to learn yet, and will have when you have lived to be as old as

I am. Men will go on learning long after you are dead and gone. But ignorance is no disgrace, so long as you are not ashamed of it. The wisest of men have been foolish about some things. There were some things which even Solomon in all his glory did not know. He did not know very much about women, or he would never have tried to live in the same house with a thousand of them. When that many wives come in at the door, the dove of peace flies out at the window. No wonder his quest for happiness turned out to be a "striving after wind." Whenever you are tempted to envy wise men their superior wisdom, Elisha, just think of King Solomon with his three hundred wives, to say nothing of his seven hundred concubines.

It is the vices of our virtues which most often trip us up, and the folly of our wisdom which most often puts us to shame. Moses was the meekest of men, and yet he shipwrecked upon the rock of presumption. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, and yet he finally played the fool to his ruin. So beware of being wise overmuch, Elisha. Don't hanker after the reputation of knowing it all. Remember that a reputation is as hard to live up to as it is to live down. By all means, don't pretend to know what you don't know. Your pretence will be sure to find you out. Better own up, and have done with it. The world has more respect for honest ignorance than it has for a pretence of knowledge. If you try to know everything, the world will have its doubts about your knowing anything. We are naturally suspicious of a cure-all. A jack-at-all-trades is master of none. It is better to be thorough than broad, if we cannot be both; better to know one thing well than many things not so well. If we

know God well, we will not have time to go to the bottom of anything else.

It is to be feared that prophets aspire to know too much. They are afraid to be caught in ignorance of anything. They must have some sort of answer for every question that is propounded to them. A little more honest agnosticism among theologians and a little less of it among scientists would perhaps be better for both. Scientists are afraid they will know too much, theologians that they will know too little. There are extremes both ways. It is just as bad to refuse to know what can be known as it is to presume to know what cannot be known. Be honest before God and man, Elisha, and frank as the day. Don't hesitate to look your people straight in the eye, and say, "I don't know," if you don't. They will respect you for it. Perhaps, after all, they will love you more for your ignorance than for your knowledge—and they will have so much more of it to love you for. You can never tell. The human heart is so strange in its turnings. We do not always love wisely, according to the wisdom of this world. A man may not be worth his salt, and yet some dog, to say nothing of some woman, will follow him to the world's end. I have met a good many men in my time, Elisha, in school and out, and it has been my observation that an honest fool stands a better chance in this world than a foolish wise man; and we have to go through this world to get to the next one. Remember that, Elisha. So many prophets seem to forget that the next world is next. They try to live in it before they get to it. It is better to take one world at a time. We will fare better in both. It takes a wise man to live in two worlds at one and the same time.

XI

Don't try to explain things that cannot be explained, Elisha, and there are so many things that can't. Most of our explanations are only names to hide our ignorance. We go about naming things, like Adam naming the animals in Eden, and then congratulate ourselves that we have explained it all. But we haven't, Elisha. We have only labeled them; and most of our labels are so thin you can see through them, or could if there were not such dark mysteries behind them.

Did you ever think how many things Jesus left unexplained, Elisha? All the old riddles that men have racked their brains over since the world began. He did not touch upon any of them. He let them strictly alone. He was too busy with the simple duties of life. His disciples were curious about many things, and plied Him with questions, but they got little satisfaction out of Him. Either the thing could not be explained, or they could not understand it. He made not attempt to explain Himself; how He came, or how He went. Others have tried to explain Him, but He gave no explanation. Who are we that we should presume to explain things which He has not explained? How much precious time, and how much good gray matter, has been wasted upon the mystery of His coming and going; and yet we are just where He left us when He went away, and no doubt He will find us there when He comes again. Was He born of Mary and Joseph, or of Mary and God, or of Mary and Joseph and God? Who knows, but Mary and Joseph and God? And they have told no tales. He came, and He did not come; He was here before. He went, and He did not go; He is here yet. Whether God became man, or man became

God, they were one in Him. And with what body did He come back from the dead? It was the same, and yet not the same; so evidently tangible, and yet so mysteriously intangible. Mary mistook Him for the gardener, and His disciples mistook Him for a ghost. He could show His hands and side to Thomas, and eat before His disciples, and yet disappear through a closed door! What is the use of trying to use our poor human wits upon a thing like that, Elisha? We might as well go out and beat our heads against a stone wall. The mystery of Mary's womb and the mystery of Joseph's tomb remain until this day, and will remain no doubt to the last day. Have respect for the great mysteries, Elisha, and remember that most everything is a great mystery at bottom. The secret things belong to God, the plain duties to you and your people.

XII

Don't try to prove things that are impossible of proof. It is a waste of breath, and you will need all your breath for more important things. Take some things for granted. Jesus did. He took God for granted, and sin, and the human soul, and the future life. He made no attempt to prove any of them. He was as sure of God as he was of the ground under His feet. He no more thought of trying to prove the one than the other. God was the major premise upon which all His thought was based. It underlies His Gospel from beginning to end and undergirds His life. If men would not take God for granted, He left them and went His way. There was nothing He could say to them. He would not argue. Life was too short, and He had too much to do. When the Forerunner fell into doubt and sent his disciples to Him with the question,

Art thou He that should come, or shall we look for another? He did not argue, or quote from the Scriptures concerning Himself. He simply told John's disciples to go back and tell their master what they had seen and heard; the blind were receiving their sight, the lame were walking, the deaf were hearing, lepers were being cleansed, the dead were raised up, and the poor had the Gospel preached to them. The good work was still going on, though John could not see it from his prison. He did not present arguments, He presented facts. When Thomas balked, and refused to believe the story that was too good to be true, the Master did not argue or scold. He knew the Doubter, how hardly he believed, and what a stupendous story he was called upon to believe. It is not easy to believe in the resurrection of the dead. All the experiences of our life are against it. There was just one thing that would convince Thomas. Jesus knew. He did not offer arguments, he offered Himself. Maybe it was impossible to rise from the dead, but there He was before Thomas' eyes, with His riven side and His pierced hands. Thomas had seen Him dead, and he now saw Him alive again. Facts are stubborn things, whether born of the flesh or of the spirit, and even a chronic doubter cannot deny them.

Nothing ever comes of argument, Elisha, but more argument. It is a game two can play at. And it is a game that can never be won. No one is ever convinced by argument. We are only confirmed in our own opinions. That is the end of all controversy. Even when you get the best of the argument, you have not won your opponent to your way of thinking. A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. Job's mouth was full of arguments, but he could not convince anybody with

them. He could not even convince himself. He could prove that God's ways were not equal, and yet he would not believe it after he had proved it. He appealed from it to his own heart, which held fast to God in the dark. Don't worry, Elisha, when you cannot prove things to your satisfaction. Religion is not an exact science. It is an adorable experience. Be content to know some things which you cannot prove, and to believe some things which you cannot understand.

Don't waste any time on the man who insists that you put God under the microscope, or he will not believe. As well might the mole say, If you want me to believe in the blue sky, you must bring it within my ken. God is not tested in a glass tube, but in the human heart. He is not proved by argument, but by trial. How can you prove the presence of the blue sky above him to the man who persists in keeping his eyes shut, or the presence of the air all about him to the man who refuses to open his lungs to it? The kingdom of heaven is not taken by logic. It must be taken by faith, or not at all; not the faith to believe it is there, but the faith to go and see. That is the way men have discovered the facts of science, and that is the way they discover the fact of God. The method is the same in both cases, though the facts are different. The unseen world cannot be proved, nor can it be disproved. It is an adventure of faith. God stands at the gateway of it, saying, Come and see. To the man who will not make the venture He remains forever unknown. Don't mistake the underlying cause of the world's doubt, Elisha. It is not occupation with this present world, but absence from the unseen. A man may be at home in the body and present with the Lord at one and the same time. The only trouble with Thomas is that he was not there, when it all hap-

pened; and the only cure for his doubt is to get him there, where it is happening. If men really want to know whether any good thing can come out of Nazareth, they must come and see. It will do no good to argue, or threaten, or scold. Tell men the truth, Elisha, and dare them to believe it; hold up a living Christ before their eyes, and challenge them to try Him.

XIII

Don't use the language of the schools, Elisha. It is a dead language, and men like to hear the Gospel in their own tongue. It is that which is handicapping the pulpit more than any other one thing. Not the gospel that is preached there, but the language that is spoken there. It is not the language which men hear through the week. The prophet speaks to them almost in another tongue. Paul said he would rather speak five words understandingly, in a language that his hearers could comprehend, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. He thanked God that he spoke with tongues, more than they all, but he was not anxious to advertise it in the pulpit. He was not there to display his learning, but to instruct his hearers. Too many modern prophets are burdened with the gift of tongues, Elisha. We soon forget the Hebrew and Greek we learn at school, and it is a great pity we don't as soon forget some of the English we learn there. The Church has got the Gospel out of Latin into the vernacular; when she has succeeded in getting it out of the vernacular of the schools into the vernacular of life, she will have taken the final step toward the common people.

Leave the language of the schools behind you, Elisha, when you leave school. It is all right in the schools, but it

is out of place in the pulpit. Men don't live in the Academy or Porch. They live on the street, in the shop and market-place, where words are few and language takes the shortest distance between two points. They speak straight from the shoulder there, and call things by their right names. And you speak the same language when you go there, Elisha. You don't talk to your people in your theological jargon when you meet them during the week. Then why take it into the pulpit with you on Sunday? They are the same people you have met between Sundays, and you are the same man. Too many prophets put on their Sunday speech with their Sunday clothes, as some folks put on their religion. It is a great mistake in both cases, and has done the cause of religion much harm. Don't use the language you heard in the schools, Elisha. Use the language you hear on the street. Not the slang, but the good Anglo-Saxon. Then the man on the street can tell what you are driving at, and he will come to hear you. He can't get heads or tails of your school talk. That is one reason he has left off going to the house of God. Don't misunderstand him. He does not object to the truth. He expects to hear it from the prophet's lips, and is disappointed when he does not. He only wants to hear it in a language he can understand.

Don't use the language of the theological schools. Men of the new school are tired of it. And don't use the language of the scientific schools. Men of the old school are afraid of it. And you have to speak to both schools. That is what makes the prophet's task so exceedingly difficult. He has to speak to all shades and shadows of opinion, to all degrees and differences of culture. The world is divided up into sections, and schools of thought; and each section has its own dialect, and each school its own

peculiar speech. If he uses the dialect of one section, or the language of one school, the other will be offended. There is only one way to avoid giving offence, to keep from arousing prejudice against your message in the minds of a part of your audience, and that is to get away from all schools to the universal speech of men. We are all upon a common footing there. It is understood everywhere, by all sorts and conditions of men. Schoolmen can understand the language of common life, but common people cannot understand the language of the schools. Remember that scholars were common men once, and are common men yet at heart. Scratch any of them and you will find our common human heart beating under the academic crust to our common human passions. And it is to that heart, common to all men, that your message is directed.

Avoid technical terms, Elisha. They are unsuited to popular speech. They are open to misunderstanding. They either have no meaning at all to the ordinary man, or they convey partial or perverted meanings. He remains unmoved by them, or he is set off in the wrong direction, after some imagined foe which the word has suggested to him, and you have lost him for the remainder of your message. Between two words which have practically the same meaning, always choose the popular and familiar term. If you have occasion to speak of evolution, for instance, call it growth. It amounts to the same thing, and nobody is afraid of that. Evolution is a "monster of so frightful mien," in the minds of some people, "as, to be hated, needs but to be" heard. But growth; that is a good old homely word which they hear every day, not knowing that it hides one of the greatest mysteries of life. They take it as a matter of course that flowers grow, and

birds, and trees, without any disrespect to their Creator, or disregard of his power; but that the world itself should have grown seems to them irreverent, and irreconcilable with the dignity of God. Folks have such queer notions, Elisha; but you will have to respect them, and take them into account in the presentation of your message, if you expect to get a fair hearing. If there is prejudice against a word in any quarter, avoid it religiously, if you would have your gospel accepted in that quarter.

Did you ever stop to wonder why the common people heard Jesus so gladly; why it was that they fell away from the synagogue to Him, and left the scribes and Pharisees to talk to empty benches? It was not because His gospel was so different. When you examine it, and compare it with that of the old school, you find that it is not. You can almost piece it out of Moses and the prophets, and they were heard in the synagogue every Sabbath. It was because His language was so different. He used the language of the carpenter shop, and not that of the schools. He spoke from life, and not from books. He talked to fishermen about casting nets, to shepherds about the keeping of sheep, to husbandmen about the vine and its branches, to publicans about the farming out of money, and to all men about a father and his son. Each man heard him in his own tongue in which he was born, in terms of his own life and daily occupation. It must have sounded wondrously refreshing to ears long used to the cant and stereotyped talk of the Pharisees. It was like streams in the desert to the thirsty traveller. Is it any wonder that Capernaum and all Galilee, even Jerusalem and all Judea, went out to hear Him, until it seemed to the envious Pharisees that the whole world had gone after

Him? There is nothing which sounds so sweet in the ears of men as their own native tongue.

He used the common speech of men, but He gave it a new content and an added meaning. The letter was the same, but the spirit was different in many cases. He breathed into it the breath of life, and it became a living soul. The words which He spake unto them were spirit and life. It was no longer a dead language. He set the old vehicles of speech to conveying higher meanings. He put heavenly treasures in the old earthen vessels. He used common words in a new figurative sense which His hearers did not at first understand. He spoke to them in metaphor and simile and parable, turning their common speech and the common events of their life to new account. He made the vine and its branches show the intimate relation between Him and His disciples, and a father and his son tell the whole story of God and man. A parable has been happily defined as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." Men heard only the earthly story at first. They missed the heavenly meaning. His disciples were constantly misunderstanding Him at first, because he used words in one sense and they understood them in another. But when they did finally understand Him, and had caught the new meanings, their whole souls were flooded with light, and unseen and eternal things were as clear as day to them. He taught them to read the heavenly meanings of earthly things, and the whole face of the world was changed for them ever afterward. He opened windows everywhere out of the common walks of our life into the unseen. The world has not been the same place since He lived here among men, and talked to them about the heavenly meaning of earthly things, and it will never be the same again.

XIV

Don't set yourself up as a dictator of belief, Elisha. The world likes the voice of authority, but it does not like the superior air. It welcomes knowledge, but it resents dictation. Honest belief cannot be enforced, and honest belief is what you are after. It does not come by fiat. It comes in answer to things that are worthy of belief, as the eye came in answer to light. If the truth does not bring it out, nothing else will. It cannot be put on from without, it must be put forth from within. It must be as free as a bird in the air to turn where it will.

Jesus did not try to dictate belief in Himself. He knew better. All sorts of rumours were afloat concerning Him. Some believed that He was Elijah come again, others that He was Jeremiah, or some one of the ancient prophets, returned to earth, still others that He was "that prophet which should come into the world," uncertain perhaps as to who "that prophet" was. Herod believed that He was John the Baptist risen from the dead. Some believed that He was a son of Satan, others that He was the son of God. Popular opinion ranged all the way from the open hostility of the Pharisees to the honest confession of Peter. He was not indifferent to it. It made a vast difference to Him whether men believed or disbelieved. He always divided His audience against itself, making friends of some, and enemies of others. He saw the one result with joy, and the other with sorrow. He rejoiced over the Roman centurion, from whom He had a right to expect so little, and mourned over unbelieving Jerusalem, from which He had a right to expect so much. The young man who went away from Him with a heavy heart left a heavier heart behind him. He had in him some of the

makings of a splendid disciple, and he had been so near the kingdom; but, alas, he had not the courage for it. He lacked the one thing needful. The Master followed his retreating figure with sorrowful eyes, but He raised not a finger to stop him. He did not want conscripts for His kingdom, He wanted volunteers. He presented Himself to men, in the most winsome manner and with the most persuasive appeal; but He left it to their own hearts to decide what they should do with Him. He invited belief, but He made no attempt to coerce it.

And if He did not try to lord it over men's consciences, who are we that we should attempt it? Don't presume to do your people's thinking for them, Elisha. You are not a labour-saving device. God evidently intended that they should do their own thinking, or He would not have put heads on their shoulders. He meant that we should get our beliefs, as we get our bread, in the sweat of our brow. Encourage men to think for themselves; and respect their thoughts when they think them, whether they agree with yours or not. You are not a master, but a messenger; not a dictator, but a counselor of souls. Your business is not dictation, but suggestion. You are not to do men's thinking, but to give them material for thought; not to live in their stead, but to put them in the way of living their own lives. Each of us must live his own life, and think his own thoughts, according to the measure of his own mind. You can do your people no greater harm, Elisha, than to step between them and the punishment of their own sins, or try to relieve them of the responsibility of their own conduct. Every man must give account of himself to God, and it is his right, as well as his duty, to live his own life. He alone will have to answer for it.

There are things which we cannot do for one another,

much as we would like to. Some things are not given out of hand. They are not gifts, but growths; not inheritances, but acquirements. Strength cannot be given, or patience, or courage; they must be won. Character is not bestowed, it is wrought out. You cannot put apples on a tree. It must bear them. Our characters are related to us, not as our clothes to our bodies, but as our fingers to our hands. We are the vine, and they are the branches. You can no more bestow your thoughts upon your people, Elisha, than you can give them the colour of your eyes or the kindness of your heart. Our beliefs, if we come by them honestly, are the result of mental processes extending through days and weeks and years, and others cannot reach the result without going over the ground which leads up to it. There is but one way to the end of a road from the beginning of it, and that is over the road, from beginning to end. We may travel on foot, or on horseback, or in an automobile; but, whatever our method of locomotion, we must somehow go over the ground. Some are slow of thought, and reach conclusions at a snail's pace, while others are of a quicker understanding, and arrive at the end more rapidly from the beginning; but, whether we plod painfully or go with swift feet, we must travel the road. We must begin at the beginning, not at the end.

And the strangest part of it all, Elisha, is that we do not always arrive at the same end from the same beginning. All roads do not lead to Rome. It depends upon which end of the road you take. The same road that led Newman to it, led Luther away from it. They set out upon the same quest, but they did not arrive at the same goal. They were both looking for some rock upon which to rest their weary feet, some sure sanctuary for their human souls, and they both found it; but not in the same

place. One found it in the bosom of the Church, the other in the haven of his own heart; and who shall say that one was not just as sincere as the other? God has His own way with each individual soul, and His way with one is not His way with another; and each individual soul has its own way of approach to God, and the way of one is not the way of another. No one has ever had a more profound respect for the privacy of the inner life than Jesus of Nazareth, and no one ever knew it better.

XV

Don't live to be seen of men, Elisha, or speak to be heard of them. You will be seen of them, and your life should bear their sight; you will be heard of them, and your words should bear their hearing. You will live before men, and speak within hearing of them, but it is not they who will sit in final judgment upon you. They will be your hearers, but they will not be your judges. Thereby will hang one of your chief difficulties, and one of your subtlest temptations. To be seen of men, and yet not to live for their eyes; to be heard of men, and yet not to speak to their ears; to live out in the open, and yet to remain unconscious of the eyes that are on you there; to be constantly in the presence of men, and yet conscious only of the presence of God; to be keenly conscious of the content of your consciousness, and yet at the same time unconscious of yourself. You will not find that easy, Elisha; and yet it is necessary to the choicest character, and the most acceptable service. Self-consciousness spoils everything. It makes children awkward, and women vain, and men unbearable. It turns strong men into bullies, and wise men into pedants, and good men into Pharisees. An

ingrowing consciousness is as painful as an ingrowing nail, and as detrimental to good health. It is as hard to get away from ourselves almost as it is to run away from our shadows. There is but one city of refuge. We must escape from ourselves into our message. And we must escape from the presence of men into the presence of God. There is no other sanctuary.

It is easy to put the praise of men before the praise of God, and let the noise of the multitude drown the still small voice in our ears. This world is so near and tangible, and that other world so apparently remote. The multitude throngs the street, and shouts from the housetops. It presses upon us with its approval or disapproval. It is so tangible to the touch, and so apparent to the eyes, and its praise is so sweet to the ear. But God is in the secret place, where there is no speech nor language, and where no audible voice is heard. He does not lift up, or cry out, or cause His voice to be heard in the street. We have to step aside from the throng, and listen long and patiently sometimes to hear His voice. And the praise of men comes so much more readily than the praise of God. Men look upon the outward appearance, and judge accordingly, but God looks upon the heart, and judges accordingly. He is not mocked, or deceived by a smooth exterior. He sees through it. And the "formation of a surface" is so much easier than the formation of a character.

The praise of men comes easily, and it also goes easily. Remember that, Elisha. Come easy, go easy. That is the rule. The things that cost little are worth little. The mushroom springs up over night, and it also disappears over night. Popular opinion is as fickle as the wind. The world runs after every newcomer. It forgets so soon. It

must have a new idol for each new day. It does not object to two idols in one day—one for the morning, and another for the afternoon. It is pleased with new toys, and casts them aside when the new wears off. Those who have lived for the favour of men have died of broken hearts and disappointed hopes. Beware how you build your house upon the sand, Elisha. It will crumble away from beneath your feet. The voice of the people is not always the voice of God. It was not in Jerusalem in the days of Jesus, nor in Florence in the days of Savonarola.

Don't expect pay, Elisha, either from God or man. Only hirelings work for pay. The workman is worthy of his hire, but no hireling is worthy of his work. God is not a paymaster. He rewards service, but He does not pay wages. The best work in the world is not done either from fear of punishment or hope of reward. It is done from sheer love of it. Those were fine words which Daniel spoke to the king, when he offered to clothe him with scarlet, and hang a chain of gold about his neck, and make him the third ruler in his kingdom, if he would read for him the handwriting on the wall, and make known the interpretation of it. "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy trinkets to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." That was an answer worthy of a prophet, Elisha. And that is what all of God's servants have said to those whom they have served. They have not cared for the world's baubles. They have cared only to serve.

God does not pay, and the world cannot. It has nothing to pay with; and it would not bestow it justly, if it had. It does not know how to reward service. It is learning, slowly and painfully, but it has not learned yet. Look how it has rewarded those who have served it—Socrates

with hemlock, and Huss with fagots, and Bunyan with imprisonment. Earth's greatest benefactors have left little of this world's goods behind them. Jesus left only the clothes on his back. The world has paid little for its choicest possessions, and rewarded but poorly its greatest adventures. Do you know what it cost to discover America, Elisha, this big continent which is housing perhaps the final experiment in human government? About a thousand dollars! You cannot buy a good automobile for that. And what did Columbus get out of it? Coldness, and neglect, and ingratitude. You can get more for a good horse than Dante got for *The Divine Comedy.* That is the way reward goes in this world. Saul slays his thousands, and David his tens of thousands; and yet Saul wears the crown, and David plays the fiddle. One man gets a mere pittance for *Paradise Lost,* and another a small fortune for *Trilby.* One man gives the world a great discovery in science or religion, and dies in poverty; and another invents a mousetrap, and dies a millionaire. Such is life in this world, Elisha, and such are its rewards.

You will not get wages for your work, Elisha; neither shall you fail of your reward. Cast your bread confidently upon the waters. It shall be gathered up after many days; if not by your hand, then by some other. The waves may carry it far and wide, and cast it upon distant shores; but not one crumb of it shall be lost. God will see to that. Not a single seed falls into the ground without His notice. Jesus did not live to reap the fruit of his labours, but others did. Wherever Paul went in his missionary journeys, in almost every city he entered, he found a handful of disciples there before him. How had they come there? No missionary had passed that way before. No delegation had been sent out from Jerusalem or Antioch. Some

Jewish pilgrim had been up to the Passover at Jerusalem, or a Roman centurion had been stationed there, or an Arabian merchant had passed that way, and had heard the Master on the street corner, or by the sea, and had gone away to tell the story. Such are the fortunes of harvest to those who sow beside all waters.

Go your way, Elisha, live your life, and do your duty, as God gives you to see it, whether the world praise or blame, whether it put you on a throne or on a cross. The world is here to-day, and there to-morrow; but God is forever, and to Him we give account.

The words of Elijah the Tishbite are ended.

THE END

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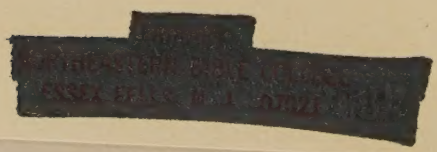

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